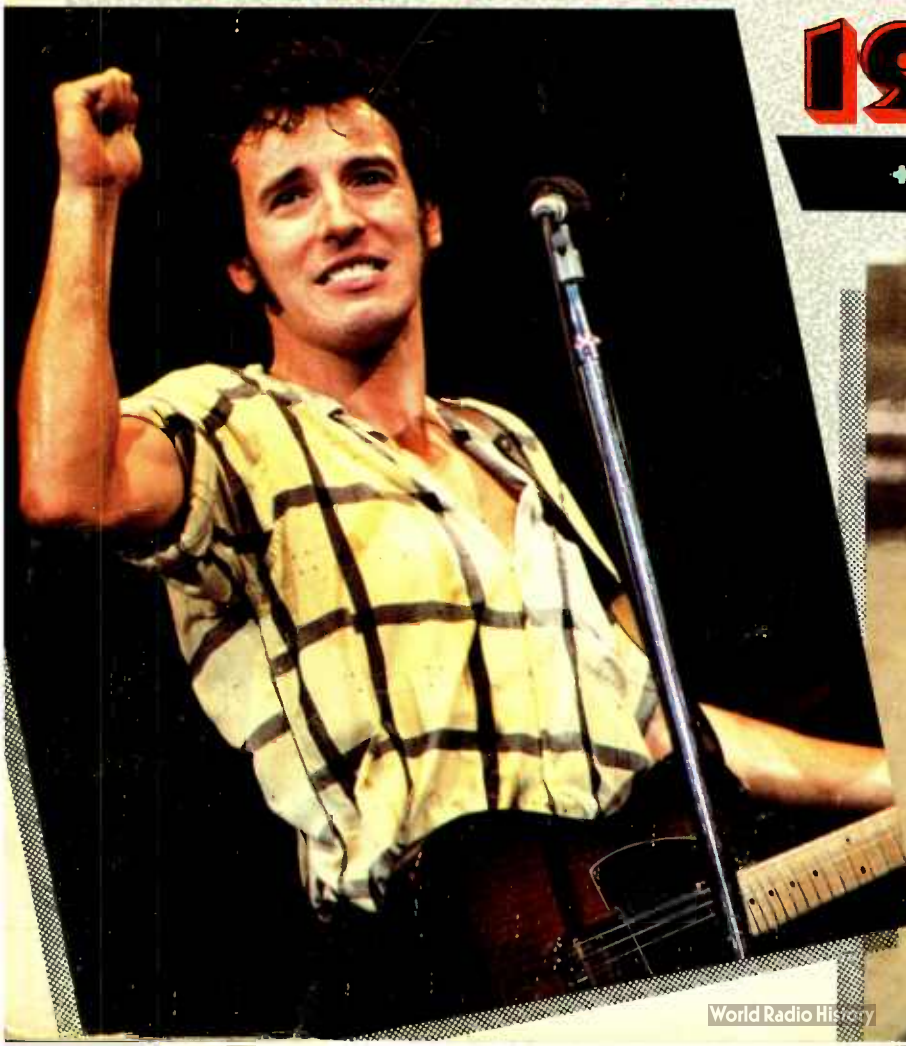
MUSICIAN
PLAYER & LISTENER

THE YEAR IN ROCK 1981-82

+ Billboard charts



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THE YEAR IN ROCK 1981-82

FROM THE EDITORS OF MUSICIAN: PLAYER & LISTENER
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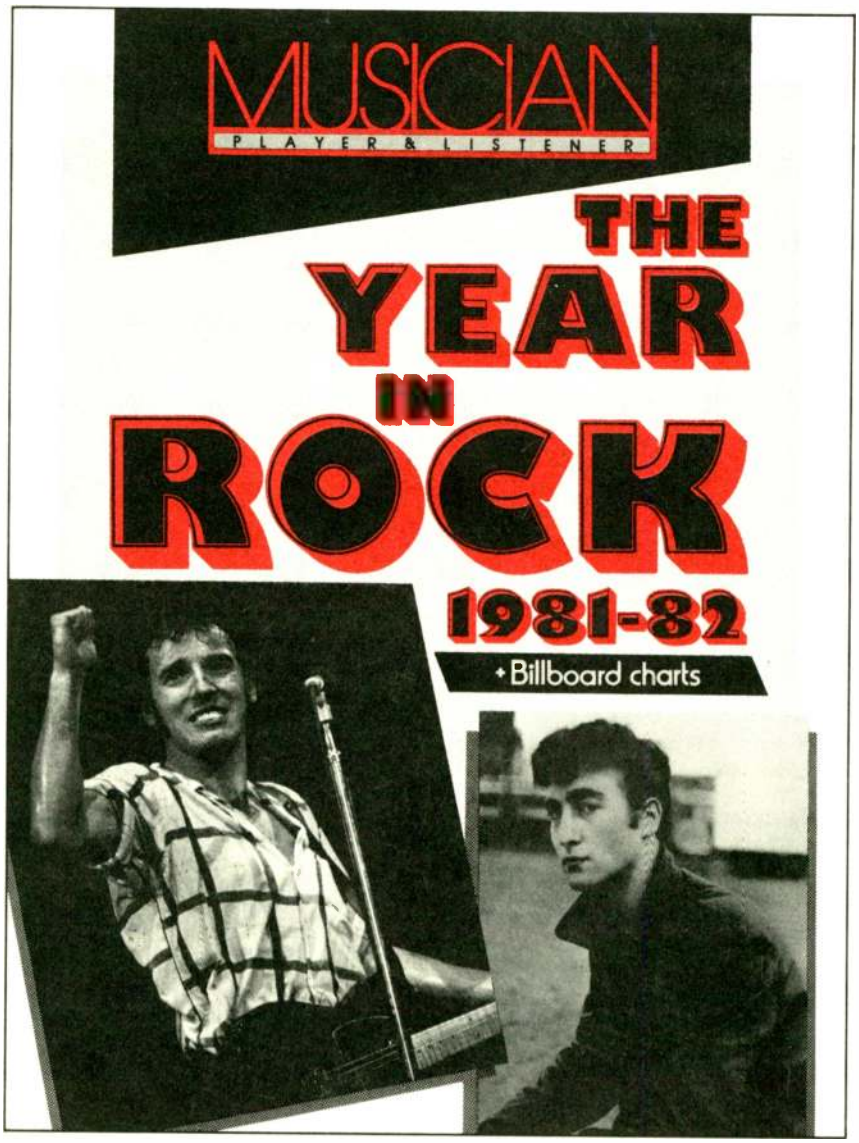
INTRODUCTION

BY JOHN SWENSON



AFTER THE DECADE of self represented by the '70s it should come as no surprise that the 1980s have revived the tumultuous socio/political essence that rock & roll was in the 1950s and '60s. Without a doubt the most significant rock & roll music of the year was a song called "Ghost Town" by the Specials, a "two-tone" pop/reggae fusion depicting the social attitude underlying the nationwide riots in England during the long hot summer of '81. One week this song was banned from radio airplay in England; the next it was the number one single in the country. We are familiar with this kind of issue-related oppression from the volatile political situation in Jamaica, where Peter Tosh and Bob Marley were both singled out in assassination attempts to quiet their outspoken defense of Rastafarian religious freedoms, but when a score of British cities are burning and a *song* is banned there the chickens have indeed come home to roost. The brilliantly opportunistic Clash took advantage of the situation to declare themselves prophets; the interesting part was that they were right.

So we're back in a very real way to 1969 and the Rolling Stones singing "Street Fighting Man." Except that the stakes, after a decade of retrenchment, are all the more desperate. In North America the situation is equally grim; the two signature events of the 1980s in America so far have been the election of Ronald Reagan, with its conservative backlash and anti-rock "Moral Majority" rhetoric; and the assassination of John Lennon. Lennon's death sent a shock wave through the rock & roll community that is still reverberating. When John F. Kennedy died Lennon and the other Beatles were there to pick up the emotional slack, but there's just a big gap behind Lennon's death.

It is not inappropriate to call Lennon's death a political assassination. As a spiritual leader Lennon may well have been as important as the Rev. Martin Luther King, and he was certainly perceived to be at least as dangerous by the government. The current head of the judiciary committee under Reagan, Strom Thurmond, was responsible for a blatantly illegal attempt to prevent Lennon from establishing U.S. residency in the early '70s. Lennon won his right to stay in the U.S., coincidentally, just as he began his five-year "retirement" in 1975. He was killed within weeks of releasing his comeback album by a man with a background of CIA-related activities (Chapman's previous assignment had been to set up "youth hostels" in the middle of the Lebanese civil war). The story was circulated that Chapman had it in for Lennon ever since he declared that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. It's a lot easier to understand Bob Dylan's unfathomable switch to "Born Again" Christianity in the wake of Lennon's assassination—Dylan may well have been treated to the same fate had he not made his rearguard move.

LENNON HAD HELPED to change the world once, in the '60s, and there's no reason to think he couldn't have done it again in the '80s. "Starting Over," said Jack Douglas, Lennon's last producer, "was the feeling that he wanted to have for the '80s, that we are in fact in the '80s, we are starting over, and it's time to be optimistic about the future. That it's time to write off George Orwell and 1984, it's time to forget about those things, that in '84 we can have what we want if we live together and for ourselves."

Say what you will, it's impossible to replace a leader of Lennon's stature and influence. His death was most certainly the end of an era.

The siege mentality that has enveloped rock in the '80s was further underscored by several other significant deaths. No corner of the music was left intact. The great and tragic songwriter Tim Hardin, who helped fuse the hard blues tradition with folk music in the '60s and thus became an important rock & roll influence as well, was found dead of a

drug overdose. The spectacular white blues guitarist Mike Bloomfield, who was in the process of making his own comeback, died in similarly tragic and senseless circumstances. Reggae's leading light, Bob Marley, who was an extremely important religious figure in his own right, finally succumbed to his half-decade struggle with cancer. Harry Chapin was killed in a gruesome traffic accident on the Long Island Expressway. Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham died in his sleep during rehearsals for a worldwide tour—the group disbanded. Canned Heat lead singer Bob Hite expired in the middle of a grueling tour.

BILL HALEY DIED. The man who helped pave the way for rock & roll around the world ended up taking the rap for all the unscrupulous managers and promoters who took advantage of rock's first years for their own profit. Because Haley was on the scene with a commercial sound and a hot band at the right time he became a rock & roll legend. The popular mythology that he was some cardboard cutout set up by the music industry to shunt off the headier impact of the black sounds being made at the time is nothing more than reverse racism. Sure, Haley was no Elvis Presley, no Chuck Berry, and he didn't try to be, either. He was the first rock & roll *bandleader*. His group, and its truly groundbreaking combination of western swing and rock & roll, was the featured element of Haley's presentation. Now that Haley has passed away, perhaps the terrible slander that haunted him through his life will be corrected.

If rock & roll were just an entertainment industry facade, all these tribulations would be enough to sink it like so much Mitch Miller/Perry Como sludge. The music industry, alarmed at the several-year-long sales slump, has geared up accordingly to turn all popular music to middle-of-the-road slush. Disco and country music have been processed at most points into such an airy package that they've replaced the Mantovani-geared easy listening formats on the radio.

But rock & roll simply refuses to roll over and die. In fact, the recent music biz setbacks have actually helped the cause of the music by wresting away the stranglehold grip the major labels have held on it. When platinum LPs were the norm, everybody from the local record store owner to the top A&R men could smugly dismiss any music that could boast of no more than a cult following. Groups were signed and groomed with an eye to make them conform to an already established success formula. The audience ceased to be important as people—it was just this demographic blotch that consumers could be forced to accept.

NOW THAT the music business has been scaled down to more realistic proportions (back to the level of, say, the late '60s/early '70s) the public is being better served. Independent companies can actually look fondly on a record that sells ten or twenty thousand copies, and as a result a lot of good, uncompromising music is being heard. For better or worse, popular music is now a special interest phenomenon. It has certainly fragmented the audience from the monolithic days of the Fillmores, when any conceivable combination of styles could be seen on the same stage on the same night. The good thing is that all these different audiences now are being accommodated.

In this creativity-rewarding climate amazing things can happen. One of the most astonishing musical developments of 1981 was the emergence of Johnny Copeland, a wholly original stylist who synthesizes the entire range of the Texas blues tradition. The 44-year-old guitarist/singer shocked critics in that he seemed to appear from nowhere, but in fact Copeland had been playing around the Harlem bar circuit in New York for years without being recorded because of the narrow range of possibilities offered through the '70s. As the recession/depression develops, the blues has regained a topicality that had dissipated in the good times rhetoric of the '70s. Indeed, the blues has staged a dramatic comeback both in the U.S. and England. White bands like ZZ Top, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Johnny Winter and NRBQ are enjoying unprecedented success in the states, while counterparts like Nine Below Zero, the Blues Band, Dexy's Midnight Runners and the Bureau have gotten their mojos working overtime in Great Britain.

Which brings us back to the Specials, a group that embodies all the well-intentioned advances the music is struggling to realize. At a time when England is polarized by racial hatred and riots, the Specials emerge as the voice of reason and reconciliation, an interracial group putting themselves on the line in an attempt to bring about social change. On the B-side of the "Ghost Town" EP is a song called "Why," written by guitarist Lynval Golding in response to a savage physical attack on the band by a gang of neo-fascist National Front thugs who took exception to the Specials' philosophy. Golding's reaction was not to pour gas on the fire but to ask what sense there was in fighting over racial differences, and his simple argument had a forceful impact.

"You've got to get through to those who've actually been brainwashed to believe it's right to take a life," he explained. "I've been attacked by this racist lot already, so you'd probably think I should be all 'I'll kiss the bastards.' But we did this gig in Plymouth and I was talking to this guy there and he was in the NF. And by the end of the conversation he was completely different. And to me that's what's needed."

What rock & roll needs more than anything else is people with those kind of convictions.

AOR ROCK

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

There's been a minor revolution in rock over the past four years that's gone almost unnoticed by the rock press. The funny thing is, missing it is like not seeing the forest for the trees, because as disco, punk, reggae and rap fade in and out of popularity, this music has consistently sold well among the great unwashed hordes of mainstream rock fans.

It doesn't have a name as such—ask a fan, and he or she will simply call it "rock and roll"—nor does it boast a theoretical base. For our purposes, call it hard pop: hard, because its sound derives from the contours of hard rock and heavy metal; pop, because its formal structure is oriented toward popsong melodicism, not the sprawling, riff-based jamming of traditional heavy metal.

Prime practitioners include REO Speedwagon, a one-time bar band from the Midwest whose 10th album, ***Hi Infidelity,*** took it from the semi-obscurity of the arena rock circuit straight to the top of the charts; Styx, a Chicago-based arena act whose blend of slick, semi-classical progressive rock and slicker Manilow-style ballads have earned it triple-platinum albums since 1977; Journey, a group of musical chameleons who stumbled onto a phenomenally commercial mutation of the San Francisco sound; Foreigner, a savvy progressive outfit whose pop smarts are undercut by purposefully dumb lyrical posturing; and Boston, a techno-crazed basement band that developed its stadium sound in the studio, and then had to learn how to duplicate it in actual stadiums.

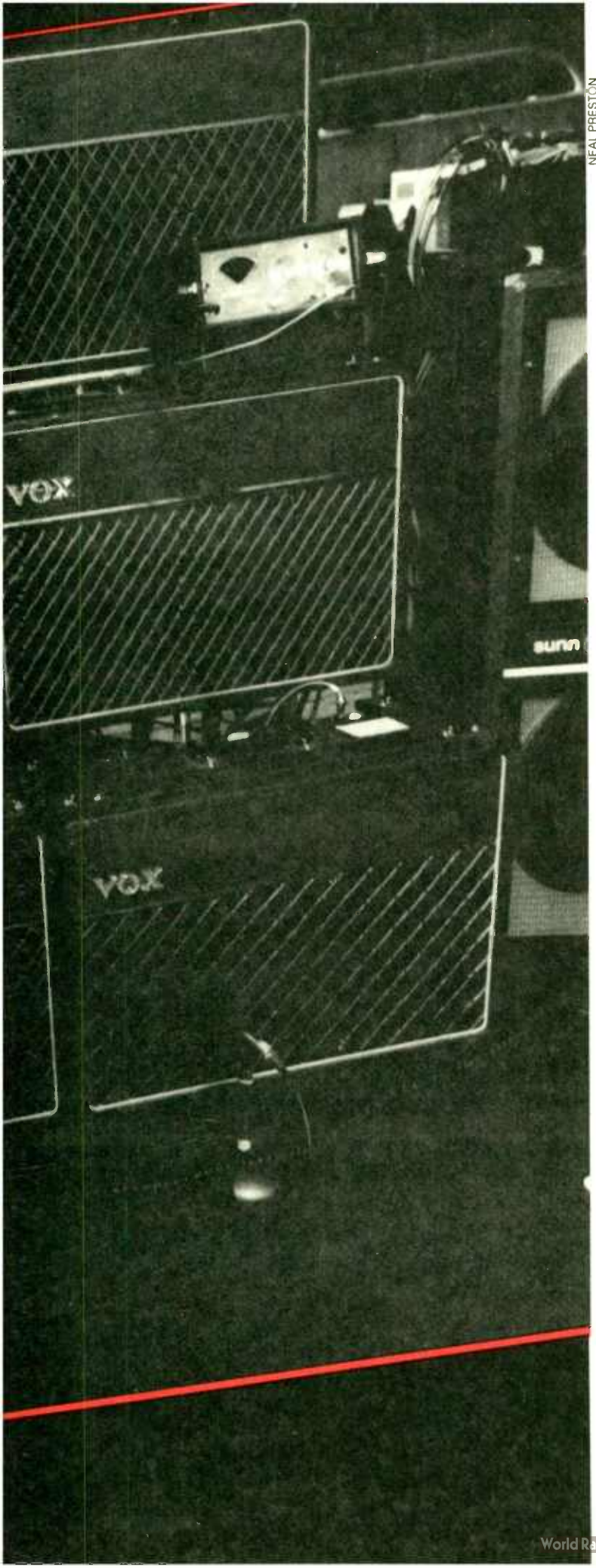
In terms of pure music, what these groups and others offer isn't terribly exceptional. At best, the music is a sophisticated test of its own limits; at worst, it's musical junk food, overly sweet and utterly non-nutritious.

What is significant is the way this sound evolved, and the attitudes toward music its popularity reflects. These are, after all, second generation rock bands, operating on a level where experience has replaced experimentation, and where the concept of what works is tempered by reaction from an audience that has grown to take certain aspects of rock and roll style as unquestioned givens. In a sense, rock has been taken over by its own phenomenology, so that details of sound have almost become the substance, not merely the fabric, of the music.

The end result is that today's rock fan, like Pavlov's dogs, has come to associate specific sounds with certain gratification, and salivates accordingly. Hence, if a band sports a fat, distortion-heavy guitar sound, a huge, throbbing drum beat and a muscular tenor voice, the listener is more likely to associate that sound with big-time rock and roll. And if the pot is sweetened by applying that sound to hookish pop instead of the basic crunch-and-holler of hard rock, so much the better.

So goes the theory, anyway. Unfortunately, the reality isn't anywhere near as neat. One of the biggest reasons that this school of music has gone unnoticed for so long (aside from the fact that most rock writers found it too aesthetically unrewarding to be deserving of much brainwork) is that its evolution has been both painfully slow and maddeningly diffuse. The sound's development wasn't linear at all, and as such the strands of cause and effect are loosely wrapped.

On an elementary level, what happened was that the vistas opened by sound technology, both in the studio and on the



NEAL PRESTON

stage, were combined with certain essentials of style to form a new notion of how rock should sound. But the articulation of this new sound was almost unconscious. As Paul Dean, the prime architect of the Loverboy sound, explained, "I had this sound in my head a long time, but I didn't know how to get it. I tried to get it with other bands, but it didn't come out right."

One of the major reasons this idealized sound was so elusive was that it began as a studio illusion. As Dean put it, "As a family of recording artists, we've learned a lot of tricks."

Perhaps the earliest of those tricks was the realization that a recording was a thing in itself, and not necessarily a document of live or concert sound. Although this discovery lead to a certain amount of studio trickery for its own sake, it also emphasized the importance of looking at instrumental sound in terms of how it *could* sound, not how it *should* sound.

Technology furthered this trend two ways. First, the advent of multi-track recording techniques lead to intense scrutiny of each instrumental presence, considering each as a component in the overall sound instead of simply looking at the instrumental tracks as a block of sound. This was particularly useful in developing the "L.A. sound" of the early '70s, wherein the reliance on studio musicians and the perception of producer as *auteur* lead to a recorded sound utterly removed from the exigencies of concert sound. Instrumental tracks became settings, where color and texture were far more important than any notion of audio verité

This in turn was quickly approved by a mass audience increasingly attuned to improvements in audio equipment. As sophisticated, high-quality sound equipment became more and more affordable, rock fans in their late teens and twenties commonly owned stereo systems of good to excellent quality, and began to demand records that made the most of their audio resources.

Furthermore, the musicians themselves greatly appreciated the flattery of the improved studio sound. Consequently, not only was this unnaturally clean sound eagerly pursued, but it lead to efforts to live up to the studio sound in concert performances. As such, stage sound was no longer the result of massive banks of amplifiers; instead, smaller amps were miked, just like in the studio, and fed through the P.A. system. As the technological advances were matched by ingenious application, more and more concert acts were able to duplicate studio tricks in concert arenas around the world.

None of this happened immediately, of course, or even with much simultaneity. While the mellow rockers were quick to take advantage of the new sound technology, most hard rock and heavy metal still tried to bludgeon its way to audio verité. Generally the results neither duplicated the stage excitement nor matched the depth and slickness of mellow rock's studio sound, as records made by Deep Purple, Humble Pie or Grand Funk Railroad can attest. Unfortunately, producers then sought to recreate volume and impact by retaining the noise level found in live performances. As a result, the sound on these albums is quite dated.

As a performer and producer who lived and worked through this period of transition, Roger Glover of Rainbow is about as authoritative as they come. "I think what most people have realized," he said, "is that most hard rock has all been softened by harmonies. One can think of Foreigner and Boston, Styx, Journey; even softer stuff like Fleetwood Mac and Frampton are all lush with harmonies."

But, Glover said, that reliance on harmony vocals, profitable though it may be,has its own cost. "There's only 100% of sound you can get on tape. You can't possibly get 120%, so you always have to work a limit. And so if there's going to be harmonies and louder vocals, something's going to have to give. And usually, that's the instrumental side. Guitar sounds are getting smaller."

Hard rock traditionally worked on the converse principle. Explained Glover, "The reason John Bonham of Led Zeppelin

A Queen-ly guitarist

got such a huge drum sound was that there was nothing else in his way. The bass was always very muted and very bassy; the guitar sound was also very thin. Jimmy Page's sound was always very thin. Which leaves a lot of room for Bonham to get that huge sound.

"Now, with a band like Rainbow that's very difficult, because Ritchie [Blackmore] doesn't have a thin sound. He has an *enormous* sound . . . his guitar sound alone could take up 100% of the tape. When you top all that with the traditional huge drum sound we go for, plus Don Airey likes a huge organ/keyboard sound, what I've got to do is juggle a lot."

Properly juggling the instrumental mix is crucial to the success of this sound, because as Glover pointed out, the desired effect is to create a sound that is absolutely huge, but without actually being any larger than necessary.

In order to scale the instrumental tracks down, one of the first things that had to go was the amount of noise traditionally allowed for hard rock. The trouble was, the producer couldn't afford to let the sound get *too* clean, otherwise the recording would miss the point. As Glover put it, "I haven't tried at all to *soften* the instrumental sound, because I think that would take away from what *is* Rainbow. I think if Rainbow came out sounding like Journey, it would be wrong. We still want to sound aggressive and hard."

What happened was that an engineer working for Polaroid came up with the ideal studio guitar sound, and used it to push his band out of its basement and onto the top of the charts. That engineer was Tom Scholz, and the band was Boston.

Scholz's big trick was to create a semblance of volume by selectively duplicating its contours. In other words, Scholz analyzed why a screaming stack of Marshall cabinets sounds so loud, and then figured out what in that sound was essential and what wasn't. Boston's Barry Goudreau explained, "First of all, we use a tremendous amount of distortion on the guitars. We use equalizers before the amplifiers, and we boost certain midrange frequencies. And that accounts for the sound. A lot of the lower frequencies are dumped off, so the ones that are boosted stand out. That way, when they are mixed in with the other instruments, the guitars really stand out."

Somebody in the ad department at Epic turned an old General Electric slogan on its head and called it "Better music through science." But to the thousands of kids who experienced rock and roll not as live music but as radio and records, Boston was a dream come true. Finally, here was a band that completely fit their idea of what a rock and roll sound was, not only in terms of guitar sound, but also through its mix of hard sound and pop songwriting. After all, if all it took was the right guitar sound, Barry Goudreau's solo album wouldn't have been such a flop.

Hard rock was no stranger to the pop charts, of course. Bands like Grand Funk Railroad and Kiss proved a long time ago that a crude, noisy instrumental sound was no real obstacle to mass-market success. The difference was that while those bands had the sales to put them on top of the charts, the demographics behind those dollars were extremely limited. Aside from ballads like "Beth" or "Only Women Bleed," both of which amounted to little more than transparent ploys to tap the housewife market, hard rock desperadoes like Kiss and Alice Cooper were pretty much stuck with a following whose median age was 14. Which was fine for the moment, but didn't promise much in longevity, particularly as statistic-crazed program directors began to realize that 14-year olds weren't much of an advertising base.

What needed to happen was for hard rock to soften enough for it to cross-over into pop without softening so much that it lost its rock credibility. The first band to really capitalize on this was Queen, whose "Bohemian Rhapsody" combined

enough vocal corn to intrigue casual top-40 listeners with carefully underplayed guitar breaks full of the bite and energy that typified the band's earlier effort. Although Roy Thomas Baker's production, which stressed the vocals over everything else and reduced the guitar crunch to a polite buzz, was a step in the right direction, the single's success was more the product of its gimmickry than a compromise between styles.

Compromise is an important factor in this music, because as a commercial sound it takes pains to appeal to a highly variegated audience. Consider REO Speedwagon, whose 11-year history reveals it to be an arena rock act above all else. Now, its *Hi Infidelity* has sat on top of the charts so long it seems to have a mortgage, and singles like "Keep On Lovin' You" prosper at a time when the chief competition is aural dental floss like Sheena Easton's "Morning Train" or Kim Carne's "Bette Davis Eyes."

Clearly, the key to REO Speedwagon's success is that the band sounds enough like hard rock to fool the kids, while dealing in light-weight pop melodies that appeal to today's Adult Contemporary market (which, as any radio adman will tell you, is where the profitable demographics are).

To hear REO Speedwagon's Kevin Cronin tell it, compromise is everything to the band's sound. "What had happened in the past," he said, "was that both Gary (Richrath) and I have real outlined musical tastes and real outlined talents. I always lean to more harmonies, a more acoustic and more melodic approach, and Gary's more obvious influence is this tougher, more rock and roll approach.

"There hadn't been a producer who could handle us both at the same time. What would end up happening is he'd end up siding with one of us, or siding with the other one of us, and it would really cause a conflict in the group.

"So what happened was that Gary and I got together and realized that we don't need anybody between us. What we need is to work closer together." Cronin and Richrath first got a bead on the material REO Speedwagon would ride to success with 1978's *You Can Tune a Piano But You Can't Tuna Fish.* That album, Cronin reported, has sold almost 2 million copies to date, a figure he feels was limited by unexceptional sound. *Nine Lives,* which followed, had better sound but leaned more toward Richrath's rock than Cronin's pop. "What I learned from both those records," Cronin concluded, "is that we can't go too much one way or too much the other way. Because in order for our band to do well, both Gary and I have to feel real comfortable with what's going on. That in turn makes everybody in the whole band, in the whole organization, feel comfortable."

Comfortable indeed, since *Hi Infidelity* is well on its way to triple-platinum.

It's funny how certain specifics of sound can mark the difference between success and failure on the charts. Cheap Trick worked the same midwestern circuit Styx and REO Speedwagon grew up in, and released three critically acclaimed albums that sold passably at best. What finally broke the group was a live album recorded in Japan, *Cheap Trick at Budokan.* The reason? Even though the songs on the


Styx

earlier albums were very strong—*Budokan* boasted only two new numbers—the studio sound provided by producer Jack Douglas was too thin and ornate, whereas the live sound at the Budokan was fat and full of presence. Once Cheap Trick's Beatlesque pop was given some muscle, it sold like hot cakes.

Oddly enough, the band has yet to duplicate *Budokan*'s success. *Dream Police,* the follow-up album, was too overblown to pass for pop, and somewhat lacking in wallop. *All Shook Up,* on the other hand, had plenty of punch, but was short on hooks. Hopefully, Cheap Trick will realize that it isn't just the crunch but the proper combination of crunch and snappy pop that sells records.

Still, the wealth of sound available to rock bands in the studio today must be incredibly seductive. Why else would bands fritter away whole albums on grandiose displays of aural embellishments? Toto, a band comprised of L.A. studio stypes with chops galore, made its debut with a stunning piece of ear-candy called *Toto.* With its tight vocal harmonies, lush cushion of synthesizers and mock-symphonic sense of scope, it had the ideal hard pop sound; better yet, it boasted a thoroughly digestible set of pop songs that quickly made it an AOR staple. But rather than follow this up with more of the same, Toto turned away from its pop base to concentrate on honing nuances of sound. No doubt the band members think there's art in there somewhere, but it's made for slim listening.

Yet when you consider the level on which these bands operate, it's no surprise that they occasionally get carried away by the mannerisms they pursue. Foreigner, for example, seems to have the idea that if its lyrics aren't completely sexist, nobody will buy the group's records. Sure, a lot of heavy metal and hard rock is misogynistic, but compared to Foreigner's Lou Gramm, Robert Plant is a lobbyist for the E.R.A. Carrying that particular aspect of hard rock to a cartoonish extreme is a shame, because it makes it all the more embarrassing to admit that Foreigner's music is imaginative and stimulating.

Lyrics are a funny case with this music anyway. While it's probably safe to say that nobody buys these records for the lyrics alone, it isn't fair to say that the lyrics go completely unnoticed. Just as countless high school juniors puzzled over the imagery of "Stairway to Heaven," there are kids today who consider the poetic puddles of Rush and Styx to be quite deep indeed.

Part of the reason for this is that these lyrics carry the same self-conscious air of profundity as the music to which they're set. After all, one of the reasons a big sound is so essential to hard pop is that it carries with it a sense of importance, and that attitude is crucial to most teenagers, particularly when their own sense of importance is under constant strain.

Beyond that, the secondary nature of the lyrics in the music's appeal, when combined with overwrought metaphors favored by Styx and Rush, turns analysis of the lyrics into a sort of inner sanctum for hard-core fans. In other words, the awkward imagery and obtuse symbolism aren't seen as bad writing by the fans simply because the harder they have to work to come up with that nugget of enlightenment, the happier they'll be. The same, by the way, holds true for Dylan and Elvis Costello fans, although on a slightly more sophisticated level.

Currently, Styx is touring behind its *Paradise Theatre,* and is eager to point out that underneath all the bad puns on *this is Paradise* is the message that America is falling apart, and will continue to do so unless the kids do something about it. If the members of Styx were part of Reagan's cabinet, they might well be inclined to see the album's double-platinum sales as a clear mandate for their message. The group may think that as it is, but give them the benefit of the doubt. Considering the traditional chauvinism of arena-rock audiences—during the hostage crisis, it was almost routine to see kids parading around during intermission with hand-painted "fuck Iran" banners, and not just at Ted Nugent shows, either—it makes sense to assume that the fans approve of this message.

But it's doubtful that they buy the records because they agree with the message more than the music. As Tommy Shaw of Styx admitted, "The people who have been Styx fans for years always understood (our message). 'Cause if you sit down and look at it, it's not that hard to understand. But there's a whole bunch of new Styx fans who are just starting to discover us, just starting to read our lyrics."

In the end, it's always the music that retains primary importance. Which is why hard pop will be hard dying. Because it's a music that's built around details of sound more than details of style, it will continue to spread into other aspects of rock. If you listen to the Professionals, ex-Sex Pistols Steve Cook and Paul Jones, you'll hear the same fat guitars sound as on the latest Rainbow album.

Further compromise? Hardly. It's just that musicians are forever vulnerable to the sort of aural flattery the hard pop sound delivers, so the mannerisms will continue to creep into all sorts of music. Particularly as hard pop's box office potential becomes more widely appreciated. Already, a fortuitous change in approach has pulled Rainbow off the heavy metal scrap heap and taken REO Speedwagon's career out of cold storage, to say nothing of what this new direction has done for the rudderless journeymen in Journey.

In fact, Journey's success seems to be striking an unlikely resonance among its progenitors. You may have noticed by now that Santana, which Greg Rolie and Neil Schon left to form Journey, has a new single out called "Winning," and that it sounds an awful lot like, uh, Journey. Whether or not this is the result of planning or coincidence is hard to say. On the one hand, Santana has flirted with this sort of material before (remember "Well Alright" from *Inner Secrets*)? On the other hand, the success of the hard pop sound could hardly have escaped the notice of someone with the commercial instincts of producer Bill Graham, and in any event, it seems unlikely that anyone in Santana is annoyed by the amount of airplay "Winning" has received.

In all fairness, it should be pointed out that Carlos Santana is no fan of recent Journey. "Once Steve Perry came in," he said, "I didn't listen to them as much. I like bits and pieces, but it's not anything that makes me listen, like Led Zeppelin. . . . I do like Neil Schon, but I don't like Neil Schon just in that environment."

Santana understands Journey's willingness to cater to its audience, but doesn't consider that much of an excuse for music. "Maybe that's why Greg [Rolie] bailed out," he reflected. "Greg is a musician. There are musicians, and there are entertainers. And the entertainers, I see 'em when I go to the circus."

But there is a certain type of musician to whom this form of entertainment is the highest level of expression. Consider the case of the Jefferson Starship. Initially, guys like singer Mickey Thomas and guitarist Craig Chaquico were brought into the group as functionaries—to play or sing what they were given by the band's creative minds. But with the defections of the past few years, a natural-born sideman like Chaquico found himself with writing duties. So it's no surprise that he does the same thing as a writer that he did as a guitarist—put big fat powerchords in all the right places. Except now he gets to choose which key those chords fall in.

It may not be art, but it does sell records. The question is, is that really what every pop group wants? Considering the overly-defensive tone of Paul Kantner's "Stairway to Cleveland," maybe not. "People tell me everything I need to know about rock and roll," he pouts, reciting a litany of bad reviews. "— you, we do what we want."

Sure, Paul. You and Freddie Silverman.

PAT BENATAR

BY NICK WRIGHT

GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA LTD

Women got tougher in 1981, and Pat Benatar's curled lip, don't-mess-with-me attitude made her a surly staple of FM play lists.

"I hardly ever listen to the other female vocalists," she says. "It's British male rock stars I admire most—people like Robert Plant, Roger Daltrey, Lou Gramm. Low-keyed and laid-back I'm not. A lot of women singers today seem to be saying, 'If you love and then hurt me, I'll die.' I say, 'If you love me and then hurt me, I'll kick your ass.'"

And in the year when the *New York Times Magazine* published a lengthy dissertation on how women in business were stabbing each other in the back just like men have always done, Benatar's stage strutting and gritty guitar backup caught a side of the New Woman not often discussed in the pages of feminist journals.

Benatar was born in Brooklyn in 1953 and spent years waiting for her break. She grew up on Long Island, getting top grades in class and studying opera after school. She enrolled at SUNY in Stonybrook as a health education major, but found it as boring as her opera studies and dropped out. She moved to Richmond, Va., and worked as a bank teller and singing waitress, working over old songs for extra tips.

A life of "singing Liza Minnelli songs with blue cheese dressing on my outfit" wasn't what Benatar wanted, however, and she came back to New York. The quest for the big break took her to a Manhattan club, Catch A Rising Star, a showcase more famous for its young comics than its young singers. Rick Newman, the owner of the club, remembers the night in 1975 that launched Benatar's career.

"It was 2:45 in the morning. We had 30 performers and she was number 27. I was on the other side of the room drinking with some friends, then suddenly I heard this voice." It was, of course, Pat Benatar, a 22-year-old beauty who belted soprano ballads from her 90-pound, 5-foot body.

Newman was stunned and booked the singer time and again into the club, sandwiched between comedy routines. He soon quit the club and became Benatar's manager and in 1980 launched *In the Heat of the Night*. Two songs ("Heatbreaker" and "We Live For Love") jumped into the Top 30 and the album stayed on the charts for most of the year. Much of the material on the debut album featured production by Michael Chapman, the high-powered hit-master who engineered the slashing style of Blondie and The Knack and who gave Benatar her first taste of the style that would make her one of the stars of 1981.

Her second album, *Crimes of Passion*, was released late in 1980 and was an even bigger hit. "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" and "Treat Me Right" became AOR favorites and established Benatar as a charter member of the '80s club of women rockers who dropped the soft and passionate for the raucous and independent, leaving the Me Generation in her wake.

And, to the delight of her mostly teenage male fans, the cover of *Crimes of Passion* projected nothing androgynous in the tough-chick image. Benatar's pose was as steamy as it was threatening, her black dress cut low in front, her mouth pouting and demure at the same moment.

The image lived on in *Precious Time*, Benatar's 1981 hit LP. Again, the tough image is fine-honed on the album's cover, with a sultry Benatar waiting on her stairs, dressed in purple and black, her eyes beckoning and threatening, her shoes high-heeled and wide open. Much of the album reflects the rejection of the '70s.

"Everyone told me I was a sweet kid with talent. Period. Being sweet doesn't pay the bills. I became defensive. That's how my stage presence emerged," she says.

The image is no better embodied than in the first hit single to come off the *Precious Time* LP. "Fire and Ice" got immediate play on the FM stations because of its love-em-and-leave-em attitude and the rocking warnings to male chauvinists of the world who are "movin' in for the kill."

She speaks of men who *got every advantage when they put out the lights* and who *think [they] got it all figured out.* But Benatar declares she's seen it all before, *and I won't be taken in by fire and ice. I wanna give you my love,* the song continues, *but you'll just take a piece of my heart.* The song owes much to Janis Joplin, laced with a kind of guitar backing FM listeners would identify with Jimmy Page.

That hardness is also very clear in a song written by Benatar's guitarist, Neil Geraldo. "Take It Anyway You Want" is about a man who twisted a woman and made her lose control *just when I needed to be on my own.* The man has "an answer, but no alibi" and he soon finds the woman sees through the old routines. This man has barked up the wrong tree and Benatar is mainstream 1981 when she belts out the line, "I don't think you want to bother me."

But the album is as notable for eclecticism as it is for its rock and roll. It borrows from Deborah Harry, The Pretenders and the one reggae tune ("It's a Tuff Life") adds little to the genre.

On the first cut of *Precious Time* a new, more reflective Benatar seems to be pushing toward the surface, predict-

ing a possible new direction. "Promises in the Dark" is Benatar's favorite song on the new album. It is her own composition, with help from guitarist Geraldo. "Neil and I wish we hadn't written it so we could plug it," Benatar says.

It has a large helping of Pretenders sound in the introduction, then blasts into the Page school of hard rock so popular on the FM airwaves. The song traces a history of women's battles, but takes a softer line than much of Benatar's work.

Like REO Speedwagon, Benatar's radio hits managed to retain the rowdy appeal of concert hall heavy metal, while streamlining and softening it for contemporary pop radio ears. While the record-buying public flocked to the stores for Benatar albums more than a few critics found the eclecticism derivative, especially in "Precious Time," the title track from the album.

It's a song that evokes the '60s notion of going with the flow, living and loving for the moment and throws in a series of lyrical references to the rich and famous for updating purposes. While British rockers spent 1981 speaking of the demise of the Empire and the collapse of the social fabric, Benatar's affluent, media-shaped American rock speaks of diet fads (done better in the Kinks "Skin and Bones"), of trips to Paris, long distance calls to Rome and "merci and wine."

The song berates the waste of money (Benatar is tough) and tells us to stop wasting our time, but "Precious Time" is devoid of answers as to why our time is precious and provides no guideline as to how we should be spending all the time we save.

"Evil Genius" is another song on the edge of making a statement about the turmoil of 1981, but stops short of describing the most important episode of the decade, the assassination of John Lennon. After telling us about the "model child" who lived a life of video fantasy, who is now hiding because of "fingerprints on the gun" there is a moment where we think this may be a song about killer-nerd Mark David Chapman. But, no, we find our killer is an "evil genius," hardly a description of the deranged Chapman.

The song again has Benatar with hands on hips, but without delivering the goods. Perhaps there is a fear of moving too close to reality for the radio listeners or perhaps Benatar is making another comment about men and how deceptive they can be.

Two other songs on the album show Benatar's appreciation for rock's roots and both "Just Like Me," a 1965 hit by Paul Revere and the Raiders, and "Helter Skelter," the 1968 Beatles' tune that supposedly inspired Charles Manson, got plenty of 1981 air play. The songs are dependent on guitar riffs for their power, but are made marketable by a kind of calculation not found in either original version.

Pat Benatar acted tough in 1981 and it made her a hit. But there seems to be a reluctance in her music to take the final step, a reflection perhaps of her success and her San Fernando Valley lifestyle. She admits the vamp on stage is a fantasy.

Says Benatar, "The woman out front who sneers and struts is just a character. It's not me.

"I'm a real home body."

FACES: BOB DYLAN

BY GEOFFREY HIMES

Bob Dylan did just three American dates in June before heading across the Atlantic for a European tour. At the end of his show in Columbia, Maryland, he told the crowd: "Clap if we didn't play the songs you came to hear." Strong clapping. "Now clap if we did play the songs you came to hear." Even stronger clapping. "I'm confused," he admitted.

The Bob Dylan at this concert was clearly an artist in transition, groping for a new persona to replace his born-again convert role. Dylan has a history of changing his entire persona—as reflected in his music, lyrics, themes, interviews and even appearance—every two or three years, and he's due for another transformation. The evidence from his latest tour is that he still believes in Christianity, but he doesn't want it to overwhelm everything else as it did just a year ago in Hartford, where he sang nothing but gospel in a grim, solemn manner. This summer, the spirituals accounted for less than half the show, and flashes of the old, impish iconoclast shone through.

The most depressing aspect of Dylan's two gospel albums was their total lack of humor. The most encouraging aspect of his concert was the reemergence of the old Dylan wit. Wearing a loud Hawaiian shirt and jogging shoes, Dylan told the crowd: "As long as we're out in the country, I guess we should sing a song about a farm." He then led his band through a very hard rock version of "Maggie's Farm." He and bassist Tim Drummond danced around the stage and broke out laughing as if they just remembered how much fun rock 'n' roll protest could be. Dylan grinned devilishly on "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues" when he sang, *I started out on burgundy but soon hit the harder stuff,* teasing his new Christian friends as he once teased his old folkie friends.

Even more encouraging were the three new songs Dylan unveiled. Only one of them, "Dead Man, Dead Man, When Will You Arise," was religious in nature, and that was done with three pounding electric guitars that would empty out most churches. "Watered Down Love" was a strong addition to Dylan's long line of snarling put-down love songs. The third new song was a stirring eulogy for Lenny Bruce, hardly what you'd expect from a fundamental-

ist. Over rumbling percussion and organ, Dylan cried: *Lenny Bruce is gone/but his spirit lives on* and raised his left arm triumphantly.

As in every Bob Dylan show since his 1979 conversion, this one began with half a dozen traditional hymns sung by his accompanying gospel singers. Clydie King, Regina McCrary, Carolyn Dennis and Madelyn Quebec displayed gorgeous voices that soared into the emotional stratosphere of quivering falsettos. Accompanied only by pianist William "Smitty" Smith (who also appears on David Lindley's new record), these opening hymns were the evening's highpoint, from a purely musical standpoint.

Dylan sang only four songs from *Slow Train Coming* and just one from *Saved.* These religious songs featured less fire and brimstone than the studio versions, and more rock 'n' roll. Steve Ripley—in an L.A. punk outfit—and Fred Tackett—looking rabbinical—pumped every song with thrashing chords and biting guitar leads. Jim Keltner contributed some very physical drumming, and William Smith rivaled Garth Hudson in his use of soulful organ and note-splattering piano.

Dylan was apparently ambivalent about his older songs. He gave "Like a Rolling Stone" an embarrassingly perfunctory reading, and forgot the lyrics to "Don't Think Twice." On the other hand, his solo acoustic version of "Girl of the North Country" was understated beautifully, and "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues" was a joyful romp. "Forever Young" was the show's dramatic highlight with a long, strong harmonica solo and sincere singing from Dylan.

Dylan sang three songs he didn't write. He closed the show with the traditional gospel hymn, "Did They See Him?" He sang "We Just Disagree" (written by Jim Krueger for Dave Mason), and its "live-and-let-live" philosophy contrasted sharply with the narrow intolerance of "Gotta Serve Somebody." Halfway through the show, Dylan and Clydie King sat on the piano bench and sang "Abraham, Martin and John" by themselves. When Dylan sang the line, *Has anybody here seen my old friend Bobby/Can you tell me where he's gone?* the crowd buzzed excitedly. It was a question people in the audience had been asking all night. It's obviously a question that Bobby Dylan has been asking himself lately.

KIM CARNES

BY GEORGE ARTHUR

Kim Carnes' ubiquitous summer hit, "Bette Davis Eyes," synthesized several of 1981's pop trends. As a remake of a mid-'60s tune by Jackie DeShannon, it took its place on sales charts characterized by an unusual number of such reworkings; in this case one more successful, musically and commercially, than the original waxing.

Carnes' success with "Bette Davis Eyes" was uncannily similar to Juice Newton's rags to riches remake of "Angel Of The Morning," a hit in the '60s for Merilee Rush.

And one of the elements which made ". . . Eyes" a distinctive hit, the raspy delivery Carnes brought to this three-minute profile of a vixen, reminded some of Bonnie Tyler's successful appropriation of Rod Stewart's accustomed jukebox slot with her 1978 hit, "It's a Heartache."

It was ironic that Carnes' break as a recording artist came with a cover tune. With her husband Dave Ellingson, she is an accomplished, and successful, songwriter. An album recorded for A&M, *Sailing,* included the winning tune from the 1976 American Song Festival, "Love Comes From Unexpected Places," a co-writing effort by her and Ellingson. And songs written by the two have been recorded by Anne Murray, Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand. Prior to "Bette Davis Eyes," her career had gotten its biggest boost with another of the songs written with her husband, "Don't Fall In Love With A Dreamer."

She and country popster Kenny Rogers recorded the song as a duet in 1979; with the Rogers Midas touch it quickly went top ten. This was followed by an entire Rogers album written by Carnes and her husband, *Gideon.* They and Rogers had met when all three had been members of the '60s pop-folk singing group, The New Christy Minstrels.

But neither her turn at the microphone with Rogers, or the success of his subsequent LP brought Carnes to the attention of the music public. "Bette Davis Eyes," however—with its atmospheric electronics, catchy amplified handclaps and playful lyrical glibness—seemingly turned the trick.

Apart from the story of its maker, the Carnes 45 was an interesting indication of the unexpected influence of some of rock's more experimental modes in even the most conservative of music industry circles.

"I've always been a rock 'n' roller," Carnes told an interviewer from New York's *Daily News,* "I love a lot of the newer rock acts that are coming over from England . . . they're so adventurous in their use of electronics and theatrical costumes." She also characterized her smash as having a "very modern, very rock 'n' roll" sound.

Pointing to earlier discs which had been promoted as middle of the road or country (presumably because of the connection with Kenny Rogers, that most urban of C&W artists), Carnes maintained that the title of the LP on which the hit single appears, *Mistaken Identity,* is a reference to earlier, inappropriate musical labels. But as the bell-like pealing of the "Bette Davis Eyes" chorus faded from pop memory, the question was whether Carnes, in common with others who had sailed to success on remakes, had actually established any identity at all with groups other than American radio programmers and television talent coordinators. Still, a hit of the magnitude of "Bette Davis Eyes" seemed to promise an active role in the music of the '80s.

EBET ROBERTS

HEAVY METAL

BY DAVID FRICKE

The big news in heavy metal over the past year has really been no news at all. Ignored by radio, abused by the press, and dismissed by all but its true loyalists as the last refuge of talentless, terminally macho scoundrels, heavy metal rock continues to sell and sell again, proving that reports of its demise in the wake of punk were greatly exaggerated. While American FM rock radio beats its retreat to the safer pastures of Top 40-like homogenization and the industry helplessly scrambles from one "next big thing" to another, heavy metal bands and fans have been carrying on business as usual. Record and ticket sales by Black Sabbath, Judas Priest, Rainbow, and upstarts Def Leppard continue to improve Britain's balance of trade. California stormtroopers Van Halen and king gonzo Ted Nugent keep packin' 'em in at arenas and stadiums everywhere. And when Top Three albums by heavy metal survivors Rush and AC/DC—after years of roadhogging and character assassination in the rock comics—become not the exception but the rule, then it becomes as plain as the nose on David Lee Roth's face that this isn't just some critic's bad dream. We're talking genuine subculture here.

What heavy metal's detractors in and out of the press do not seem to understand, new wave snobbishness withstanding, is that heavy metal is a valid form of rock & roll expression, however limited it may be in scope or vocabulary. Just as the Summer-of-Punk bands like the Sex Pistols, the Clash, and Sham 69 embodied the seething anger and snowballing frustration of British youth faced with rising unemployment and a dead-end economy (the recent riots in England, are, for the most part, Johnny Rotten's prophecy come true), just as the New Romantic fantasy championed by clotheshorse Steve Strange and art-funk band Spandau Ballet is one way out, heavy metal represents for millions of British teenagers and particularly America's sons and daughters of middle and working class suburbia an impossible dream made flesh. It is rock & roll on the grandest scale—the lights, the action as musicians grind their axes as if they were weapons of war one minute and phallic symbols the next, the sound as the music pours out of mountains of speaker cabinets like molten lava. At the same time, heavy metal appeals to every young male's basic instincts. A rock & roller rocks all night and parties all day, he sees the world the hard way, and he always gets his girl. It's nice work if you can get it—and if you work in a machine shop or are busy flunking out of high school, you can't—but records and concerts are the next best thing.

What's more, in the race for commercial stakes, heavy metal bands are invariably underdogs—given short shrift on radio and in the press—which makes the heavy metal fan all the more determined to stick with his favorite band. Which probably explains, at least in part, the enduring popularity of art-rock power trio Rush, who were headlining arenas long before their 1981 album *Moving Pictures*. For years, Rush were big in their native Canada, the States, England, and Europe for precisely the same reasons they were being mauled by the critics—their Led Zep-a-phonic roar tempered by complex arrangements a la Genesis and Yes, drummer/lyricist Neil Peart's epic storylines, bassist and singer Geddy Lee's banshee wail. For their 1980 LP *Permanent Waves* and then *Moving Pictures*, they simply tightened up their songs to airplay length and added a few new wrinkles like the emphatic Police-like reggae shuffle of "Vital Signs" while Lee brought his voice down a couple of octaves. All of a sudden, they strike Top Three.

With their multi-million seller *Back in Black*, Australian high-amp boogie men simply reaped what they had been sowing on the road all along. The death of lead singer Bon Scott, hard liver extraordinaire, February 19, 1980 only made the band carry on harder. In Brian Johnson (formerly with Newcastle rockers Geordie) they certainly found his equal, a man with a sandpaper roar and lascivious snarl. Producer Robert John Lange again gave the whiplash riffing of guitarists Angus and Malcolm Young a slightly more commercial but no less relentless edge and the rest is platinum history. As if to prove they always had it coming, an Atlantic release of old material previously unissued in the U.S. featuring Scott titled *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap* sails into the Top Ten while *Back in Black* is still in the Top Thirty. Come August, 1981, AC/DC have also headlined the mammoth second annual Castle Donington heavy metal festival in England.

Van Halen and Ted Nugent simply continued doing what they do best, except even more so. Not long after guitarist Eddie Van Halen married TV sweetheart Valerie Bertinelli *(One Day at a Time)*, the band issued their fourth Warner Brothers album *Fair Warning* and hit the arena circuit. Ted Nugent's latest live album *Intensities in Ten Cities* didn't exactly sell *Double Live Gonzo*-style. But on his next tour, he reclaimed his throne as the emperor of excess by adding no fewer than three guitarists, all brothers, to his band.

That heavy metal kids have remarkably long memories was demonstrated this year by the hellacious return of John "Ozzy" Osbourne, former lead throat with princes of rock's darkness Black Sabbath. His old band had beaten him to the punch with a new album *Heaven and Hell* recorded with ex-Rainbow singer Ronnie James Dio and the celebrated "Black and Blue" tour with Blue Oyster Cult. But Ozzy opened his own 1981 album-and-tour blitz with a real grandstand play, biting the head off a dove (witnesses claim it was alive, Ozzy later said the bird was already dead) at a CBS promotion in Los Angeles. Ozzy went on to sell out theatres everywhere with his new band Blizzard of Oz while his new album of the same name went gold within six months. By the time he returned to America in August '81, he was already topping the bill at major arenas and prepping his fans for the next album, suitably titled *Diary of a Madman*.

Similarly, German guitarist Michael Schenker returned after a long layoff following his on-again-off-again tour of duty with UFO to release his first solo album and tour Britain and the States. The LP, simply titled *Michael Schenker Group*, was no great revelation, sounding mostly like Rainbow outtakes although Schenker himself was in spirited form. But he came to America with a five-star band featuring bassist Chris Glen from the Sensational Alex Harvey Band, guitarist/keysman Paul Raymond (also ex-UFO and Savoy Brown), and drummer Cozy Powell who had just quit Rainbow.

With both Ronnie Dio and Cozy Powell gone, that meant another ride on Ritchie Blackmore's personnel merry-go-round. Dio's replacement Graham Bonnet was gone after the band's Castle Donington headline gig last year and Blackmore replaced him and Powell with two unknown Yanks, singer Joe Lynn Turner and Long Island boy Bob Rondinelli on drums. Though not technically a heavy metal band, Anglo-American troupe Foreigner went through some changes, slimming down to a quartet after the axing of multi-instrumentalist Ian McDonald and keyboard player Al Greenwood. Coincidentally, they also came up with their best album to date, *4*, including a mutant funk romp called "Urgent" starring Motown great Junior Walker on sax.

PAUL COX/RETNA LTD

Judas Priest

The year was not an especially good one for American metal. Aerosmith is for all practical purposes no more. Guitarist Joe Perry released a disappointing second LP by his own band called *I've Got the Rock & Rolls Again*. Then Brad Whitford took his leave to form a new group with ex-Nugent bassist Derek St. Holmes, imaginatively titled the Whitford/St. Holmes Band. ZZ Top, Blackfoot and Molly Hatchet kept plugging away on behalf of the Dixie contingent. One of the country's more commercially promising bands Riot had their third LP *Fire Down Below* stalled for months by Capitol Records until Elektra intervened with a new contract. It took Canadian hacks Loverboy to notch up

the best-selling HM debut, going gold in the States and platinum up north. There was, of course, nothing new from Boston. And the pomp and circumstance of platinum kings REO Speedwagon and Styx, with *Hi Infidelity* and *Paradise Theatre* respectively, simply doesn't count.

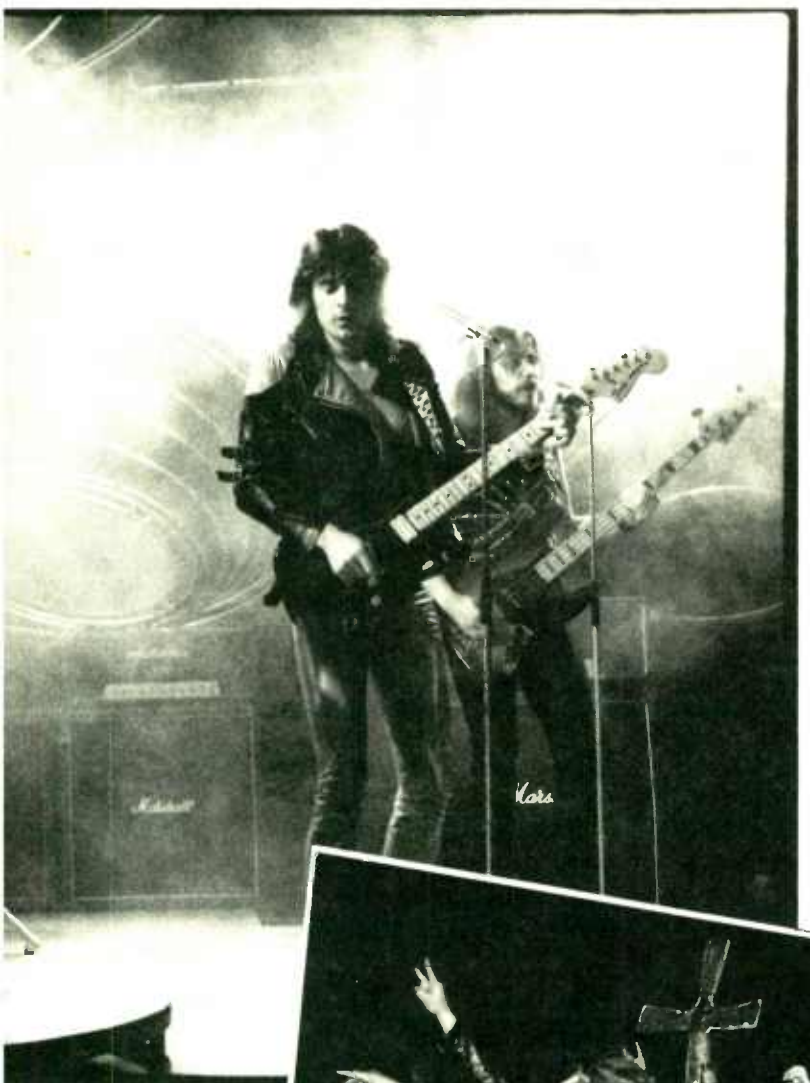
The so-called New Wave of British Heavy Metal went as quickly as it came, although many of the bands themselves survived. Trumpeted by the English music press, particularly fad-ist bible *Sounds*, the NWoBHM was really a misnomer since most of the groups rounded up under that heading weren't so new. Judas Priest, of course, had been recording since the mid-'70s. Saxon, which released two albums in the States in the last year, had been around as long. Then there was Motorhead, led by ex-Hawkwind bassist Lemmy, who were doing deafening Blue Cheer imitations back in '77. Radio might not go anywhere near them, but the U.S. release of *Ace of Spades* and their live *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith* combined with extensive touring has already set off a strong Motorhead buzz.

Of the new U.K. bands, only Sabbath heirs Iron Maiden and highly talented youngbloods Def Leppard made any substantial impact. The American HM underground turned out in force to see Iron Maiden give Judas Priest a run for their metal on a summer '81 tour to promote their *Killers* LP. But it was Def Leppard that walked away with the *Best New Group* award in the Circus Magazine reader's poll on the strength of three months' worth of U.S. concerts and a rousing debut album *On Through the Night*, from which "Rock Brigade" went on to become an FM radio anthem. Leppard's followup *High 'n' Dry*, produced by Robert John Lange, was a little long in coming yet well worth the wait. Vastly improved material and the slight commercial sheen given Joe Elliott's punkish yell and the Steve Clark-Pete Willis guitar axis make it as one of the year's best.

And what of the old standbys? The long-mooted Deep Purple reunion is no closer to reality since Ritchie Blackmore won't do it without singer Ian Gillan, busy with his own band Gillan, and organist Jon Lord and drummer Ian Paice have switched loyalties to Whitesnake, the group led by latter-day Purple vocalist David Coverdale. The tragic accidental death of drummer John Bonham on the eve of a fall '80 Led Zeppelin tour of America signalled the end of that premier heavy metal band.

New supergroups are standing by to take its place. At this writing, XYZ—Jimmy Page, Yes bassist and drummer Chris Squire and Alan White—is still little more than a rumor. Steve Howe, Carl Palmer, Buggles-Yes man Geoff Downes, and journeyman bassist John Wetton have banded together as Asia and signed to the high-powered Geffen label. Robert Fripp has also announced the reformation of King Crimson with LP (*Discipline*) and tour to follow, although the only other ex-Crimson player is drummer Bill Bruford and the whole band previously toured England under the name Discipline.

Like it or lump it, heavy metal—the illegitimate offspring of '60s electric blues and the larger-than-life rock star tradition—refuses to go away. The song remains the same, but the audience if anything is getting larger. Consider the example of a recent full-length animated motion picture full of everything the music stands for. Sex, drugs, heroes, sci-fi grandeur, all based on an adult cartoon magazine with a soundtrack by Sabbath, Cheap Trick, Nazareth, and even a reunited Grand Funk Railroad. It couldn't help but be the teenage rock blockbuster of the year. After all, the name of it was *Heavy Metal*.



JAMES SHIVE

I HAVE SEEN THE PAST OF ROCK N' ROLL AND IT IS ZZ TOP

BY LESTER BANGS

Chances are you think ZZ Top are just another shlocky arena-slotted power trio, grinding out stale boogies for your archetypal toiletful of soporonic teenage cretins, a unit more renowned for toting rattlesnakes in plastic cages around the stages of the world with them than the honorifics accruing to their chops, three fuzzy galoots who—face it—might as well be Status Quo in jive li'l cowboy hats.

If that's your take on them, you better clear the snot out of your ears. I have seen rock's past and it is ZZ Top, which hotrods the present good as it wants with snapping carburetors, so who needs the future (which we all know doesn't exist anyway)?

I'll be the first to admit that I was once an unbeliever too. In the five years I was an editor at *Creem*, which bills itself "America's Only Rock 'n' roll Magazine," I never made it to see ZZ Top once, and when their albums came in I routinely assigned them for review and forgot about them. They certainly had nothing to say to my current and ongoing condition of existential despair (even when I *thought* getting laid was The Answer, I didn't want to hear about it in music), and was breaking possibly less than zero new sonic ground. As a guitarist friend of avant-garde bent said to me yesterday while handing me back the copy of *Deguello*: "They're obviously morons."

I think a lot of this snobbery is geographic, but more of it is generic—even when us Northern rock critics and hipster musicians were into heavy metal, we had contempt for that lowest of all forms, the "boogie band." Punk rock was *creatively* cretinous, whereas what had come to be known as "boogie" just seemed mechanical beyond any redeeming crassness.

Meanwhile, ZZ Top just kept releasing gold and then platinum albums and selling out tours, climaxing with the 1976 Worldwide Texas Tour, which made them eleven and a half million dollars, utilizing five semi's weighing a total of 75 tons just to tote around cacti, two sidewinders, a buzzard, a longhorn steer, a genuine American buffalo (all these critters living, though caged) and a 35-ton, 3,000 square foot stage in the shape of the Lone Star State. Add cowboy hats and Nudie suits to this menagerie and you had a band that *had* to be jive.

So far gone was I into this snobbery that I didn't even notice that ZZ Top disappeared from concert halls for three years and recording studios for almost five. In the meantime, of course, New Wave happened, and one of the side effects of New Wave was that even as it revealed many of the decade's superstar bands for the bloated monstrosities that they were, it also opened you up in a way that was almost perverse to the fact that there was no reason to be stuck up about good music of any kind, that the mainstream and outer space were equally valid and might even be the same place in the end. In rejecting everything that had come *just* before them, New Wavers stumbled upon their own roots, as the Chuck Berry guitar sound of the Sex Pistols and just about any cut on the new Clash album attest. Besides which the snobbery of a lot of these groups pretending to play music that was genuinely new while remaining old-fashioned as hell (from Television to the Police) was enough to drive you back to Glenn Miller.

In the middle of all this came *Deguello* and *El Loco*, scorchers that pulled off that near-miracle of taking those same old blues licks and hurling them back at you with enough intensity and conviction to razor off your lobes. Guitarist Billy Gibbons, bassist Dusty Hill and drummer Frank Bead play with a ferocity and cohesion that few bands ever achieve, and what once seemed like a routine blues-metal linkup now stands revealed as drawing on a richer tradition of American music and experience. This seems partly attributable to the introduction of saxophones the band-members taught themselves to play on certain songs, partly to what I would call a deeper extension of their songs' subject matter into *pachuco* low-rider consciousness, partly to the fact that, as *Dallas Morning News* writer Pete Oppel correctly pointed out, ZZ Top are not so much a blues or boogie band as "a Texas highway band . . . ZZ Top understands the blues form, especially the new West highway blues, better than any of the heavy metal bands out of the Midwest or Southern California. To these other bands, road songs are tales of backstage and hotel rooms. To ZZ Top, a road song is of being arrested while driving blind, or picking up hitchhikers named Previous and Grace, of spending time on America's roads."

At a recent concert at San Francisco's Cow Palace they played with what can only be called a *friendly* frenzy—the music was blistering and loud as they come, but there was a warmth between the band and their audience, an absolute absence of superstar condescension that gave a rare feeling of concert camaraderie to everyone present. I usually hate power trios and almost always find myself truly uptight in arenas, but ZZ Top put out such a big sound, and Gibbons' solos were so commanding yet economical and un-ego-aggrandizing, that you didn't miss that other guitar.

It was a great show from a band who at this point should have no trouble proving to even the most jaded and skeptical that they *deserve* their position as one of the most popular live acts in the world, and when I met them at the after-gig party I found them to be as friendly, unaffected and conversationally reciprocal a bunch of rockstars as I've ever (rarely, believe me) met in my life. The next morning we sat down over Pina Colada breakfasts for this interview:

BANGS: It seems to me that there are two kinds of musicians: those who believe that rock or anything is a definite form

with strict rules that must be followed, and those who ignore the rules and may even break the form, just doing whatever they feel like.

FRANK: We subscribe more to the latter theory: just do what feels right. We may have certain little pieces that are like touchstones to us, but it's fairly unorganized as far as amounts of time, and even changes sometimes, progressions are thrown out. A chord will feel good, we'll come up to a part in the song and one night it might last ten seconds, the next night it might last ten minutes, just depending on how it goes. And that, for us, keeps it interesting night after night. Sometimes the songs are like these suites, these medleys, and sometimes they're just little AM two minute 45 second songs.

DUSTY: I sat in with Lightnin' Hopkins one time, and there are certain rules, or there's supposed to be, when you make the next chord change, and he doesn't subscribe to that. I was sittin' in this club talking to somebody and he was sittin' behind me and I didn't know it, and I said "It's really strange, he doesn't change right." And he tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Lightnin' changes where Lightnin' *wants* to change." He said, "I wrote the song, I can rewrite it ever' night." I said, "Okay," 'cause there was no arguin' with that.

BANGS: So why did you guys take three years off?

FRANK: We just kinda got let loose and took advantage of our situation.

DUSTY: None of us were physically or mentally ill, or too awful drug down by everything. We'd just been tourin' for a lotta years pretty strong and heavy and needed some time off, and one thing led to another.

BANGS: Sometimes I wish the music was a little more psychotic, atonal. Do you have any interest in moving in that direction?

BILLY: Well, we watch with great interest all the new developments: New Wave, No Wave, etc. I got a real nice collection of cover art if nothing else. But it's hard to say what it could mean to ZZ Top. We'll probably get on it after it's . . .

BANGS: Dead.

BILLY: (Laughter) Right.

BANGS: Like Elmore James.

BILLY: (Laughter) Right, right. Yeah, but if you get on somethin' far enough behind, there's a chance that you might be so far back that you're ahead of the next one. So I don't know if it'll ever come to that, but there's definitely some manic stuff goin' on up there, that the psychosis is pretty valid.

BANGS: Do you find that some people think your music must be lousy because you're so popular?

BILLY: (Laughs) Oh yeah! I've run into that! Also there's a certain faction that really think we're simpletons, you know what I mean?

BANGS: Well, you're from Texas, aren't ya? It's like Lenny Bruce said about L.B.J.: it was his sound: "Folks, ah think new-clear fission—" "Shut up, shmuck, you don't think nothin'!"

FRANK: We have got the typical Texan attitude, though, that anybody from Texas thinks that everybody *else* is out of it!

BANGS: Let's talk about sex. This stockings song, did you ever have the desire to put the things on yourself?

BILLY: I have worn 'em. Ike Turner gave me my first pair of pantyhose.

BANGS: Does he wear 'em too?

BILLY: Oh yeah, he and his whole band—dig this, we played a show in Atlanta, 15,000 black people, I said, "We're gonna play a blues tune now—"YOU GONNA DO A BLUES?! A *WHAT???!* GO HEAD ON, *DO* IT!!!" It was so funny, but Ike's band was so coldblooded, black velvet hotpants, black pantyhose, kneehigh boots, all of 'em, man, and it was *fine*.

DUSTY: Big band, all movin'—

BILLY: Yeah. Ike moves a quarter of an inch and his band stops. After the show he was admiring one of our guitars, and you know he's got that low, so-cool Beatle haircut, and a blue jumpsuit and says, "Yeah, I like that guitar you got . . . but, uh, say, uh . . . you guys need a little spicin' up on y' stage stuff . . ." I said, "Why, whudduya mean?" He said, "Come over here." He got this guy that was the coordinator of their wardrobes and said, "Give him some o' them stockins, willya?" And he came out with these brand new packs of Hanes black pantyhose, says, "Here, take these." So the next night in Memphis we got up, I said, "Oh, I gotta do it—"

DUSTY: You gotta understand that we just had Memphis goin', it took a while for 'em to accept the cowboy hats and the boots, and they were finally goin' for it, and now we come back and Billy's doin' his things in hotpants and pantyhose . . .

BANGS: What was the reaction?

BILLY: It was "Either play your ass off and get through this one or we're dead." We pulled it off. There was some "hey, baby" and whistles.

BANGS: Don't you think a lot of musicians get unduly sidetracked in the technical end at the expense of the feel and soul of the thing?

BILLY: Sure. Jimmy Vaughan [guitarist for the Fabulous Thunderbirds] and I are real close, and one night he broke a string. They're gettin' ready to go off on tour and they're playin' their last big gig in Austin, and he's playin' a Fender Strat, and if you break a string on a Strat the whole thing goes out of tune. I was sayin', "Now how's this gonna work?" and I saw Vaughan look over at the bass player, who's equally as sick, and just had this smile as if to say, "Okay, *now* we can start cooking, gentlemen," and the whole place went nuts from that moment on. Did they stop and change the string? Hell no, they just kept goin'. They burned the place down.

BANGS: Bob Quine says he always does his best stuff when he doesn't know what he's doing.

FRANK: It's that old phrase about somebody comin' up to the piano player and saying, "Do you know how to read music?" "Well, not enough to hurt."

SOUTHERN ROCK

BY JOHN SWENSON

The most important event in 1981 for Southern rock was the inauguration of Ronald Reagan as President. In the Carter administration musicians were accorded tremendous respect and influence, and Southern rockers in particular enjoyed special privileges because of their favored son status. The Atlanta Rhythm Section, for example, went from cult status to instant celebrity under Carter, and even played a concert on the back lawn of the White House. In '81 the band was certainly not invited to Washington by the new administration.

Reagan represented an anti-rock & roll bias with all the sinister overtones of Mormon cultural fascism (instead of Southern rockers we had Osmonds at the inauguration singing "Ronnie Be Good"), the fanatical totalitarianism of the "Moral Majority" (which, naturally, claims rock & roll is devil worship), and even Reagan's psychotic lust for vengeance on his vanquished opposition (a two-bit actor's jealousy at being superceded by a new breed of entertainer). The advances made by Southern rockers over the period of a decade in their own communities were wiped out in one ugly blast of conservative backlash, and the music was once again relegated to outlaw status. Thus the late '60s/early '70s polarization of the kids (now including a lot of people pushing 40) vs. the establishment (once again meaning everybody against having a good time) was raised anew.

As much of a tragedy as this trend was socially, it wasn't altogether such a bad thing for the music itself. Greg Allman makes a much better lead singer than a statesman. The Allman Brothers continued their near-miraculous comeback with *Brothers Of the Road*, a spirited record which featured several outstanding vocals by Greg, particularly on "Maybe We Can Go Back To Yesterday" and "Never Knew How Much (I Needed You)."

While Molly Hatchet and the Outlaws continued to expand their arena-level popularity without providing much in the way of substance, the Marshall Tucker Band rebounded from the death of Tommy Caldwell with an impressive LP, *Dedicated*.

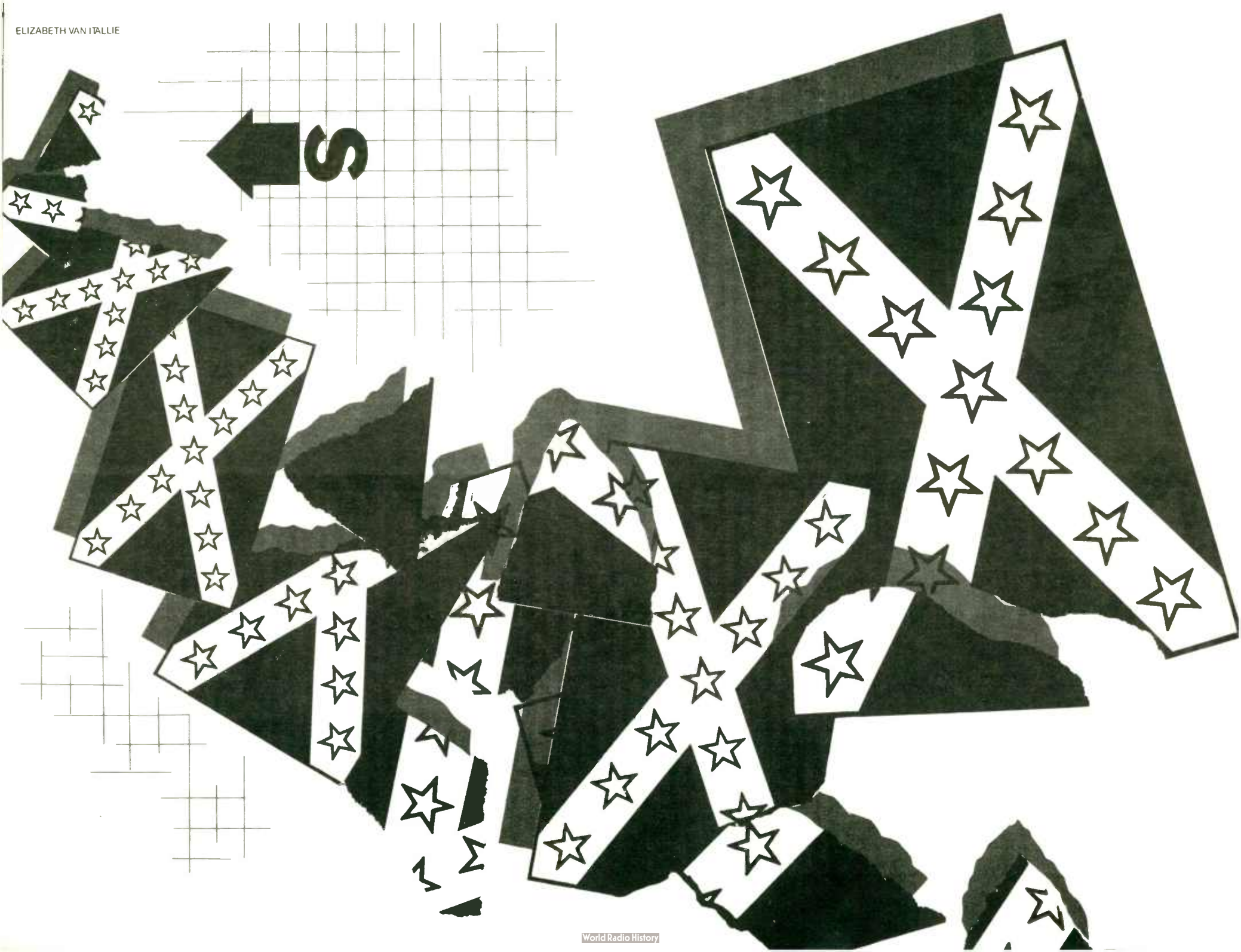
The most significant contribution to Southern rock, however, continued to be presented under the umbrella of Lynyrd Skynyrd. It's a tribute to that band's musical/aesthetic conception and the leadership of the late Ronnie Van Zant that the Skynyrd sound lives on in a vital way, instead of lapsing into the bland trademark sound that Capricorn records once plied with its slew of Allman Brothers imitations. Part of the reason the Skynyrd sound lives on is that its practitioners are *not* imitating it (Molly Hatchet does, and to their detriment), but are *recreating* it.

Blackfoot, led by ex-Skynyrds Rick Medlock and Greg Walker, finally broke through in '81 with the earsplitting *Marauder* and a live act that reportedly blew headliner Ted Nugent off the stage repeatedly during a cross country tour. The Rossington-Collins band, formed by the surviving members of Lynyrd Skynyrd, released a magnificent second LP that once again placed them at the top level of the genre.

Finally, 1981 was the year that Ronnie Van Zant's two talented younger brothers, Don and Johnny, made significant breakthroughs for Southern rock. Don's band, 38 Special, broke through to mass national recognition with their blockbuster fourth album, *Milk Eyed Southern Boys*. 38 has helped expand the conceptual limits of Southern rock by coming up with a unique sound that fuses elements of traditional blues and r&b, British progressive rock and parts of the Southern rock style coined by Skynyrd. The band features Van Zant's gritty singing and the fantastic dual guitar combination of Don Barnes and Jeff Carlisi.

Johnny Van Zant's second album, *Round Two*, proves that his remarkable debut record was no one-shot fluke. While Johnny is not yet as good a songwriter as his older brother was, he is a much stronger singer and has a burning ambition to match his brother's accomplishments. As part of the new wave of Southern rockers, Johnny is also able to take some advantage of the outlaw status Southern rock has once again been relegated to. When he wrote "Hard Luck Story," a song critical of the president, his remarks were aimed at Carter. "But now," he says, "the song's about Reagan—whoever the hell's in there!"

ELIZABETH VAN ITALLIE



BLUE COLLAR ROCK

BY GEOFFREY HINES

JAMES SHIVE

In 1965, an autoworker was your best friend's father. You and your friend would sit cross-legged on his bedroom floor, listening to Bob Dylan's "Ballad of a Thin Man" on a Sears stereo, and sneak a cigarette (tobacco back then). When Dylan sang: *Something is happening here/ but you don't know what it is/ do you, Mr. Jones?* you'd snicker that Dylan must be referring to your friend's beer-bellied, crew-cut, Wallace-voting father.

In 1981, the autoworker is your best friend. He drives straight from the assembly line to the basketball arena to join you for the Bruce Springsteen show. When Bruce goes into one of his rambling, theatrical monologues (*There's two kinds of work a person can do/there's the people lucky enough to do work that changes the world/and there's people who just do the work that keeps the world from falling apart.*), your friend is nodding with eyes all the way open. When Bruce shouts out defiantly: *Mister, I ain't a boy/ no, I'm a man/ and I believe in a promised land,* your friend has jumped on his chair and is pumping his flannel-shirted arm and clenched fist in the air.

The American rock audience isn't a bunch of schoolkids anymore; they work for a living, and most of them punch a time clock. American new wave—in sharp contrast to British new wave—has largely been art songs for graduate students, and has had little to say to most of the American audience. Instead the battle for American rock is shaping up with two opposing forces: the suburban escapism of bands like Styx, R.E.O. Speedwagon, Van Halen and the Eagles; and the blue collar realism of writers like Bruce Springsteen, Bob Seger, Tom Petty and (in one of his guises) Neil Young.

Blue collar rock combines the classic traditions of mainstream rock with lyrics about those who work all day for somebody else and who drive all night looking for something to call their own. The music is Chuck Berry guitar and Phil Spector keyboards over a Motown beat with melodies that move like the early Beatles and Rolling Stones. For a tradition-less land, this music connects young workers into the one tradition they care about.

Bob Seger sings: *I work my back till it's racked with pain/ the boss can't even remember my name.* Yet in the face of this and other frustrations, Seger insists he's *still running against the wind.* Blue collar rock is full of these descriptions of frustration and stubborn optimism. In concert many of these performers further strengthen the ties between the real world and songs by introducing numbers with long, theatrical monologues that give the songs a firm context.

If blue collar rock is to become a real movement in American music, though, it has to extend far beyond the quartet of Springsteen, Seger, Petty and Young. So, for the past two years, I've gone looking for other blue collar rockers with the same style and power. I found some Springsteen associates (Southside Johnny and the Michael Stanley Band) who had the style but not the power. I found some Springsteen imitators (John Cougar and D.L. Byron) who were outright frauds. I noted the obvious British counterparts (the Clash, Graham Parker, Joe Jackson, etc.). I even discovered some Australian equivalents (Cold Chisel and Jo Jo Zep & the Falcons).

Most importantly, I found five American acts with the power to make blue collar rock a thriving genre: Garland Jeffreys, Robin Land & the Chartbusters, the Iron City Houserockers, the Bill Blue Band and Beaver Brown. Jeffreys and Lane are getting the publicity they need, but the other three acts are among rock's best kept secrets.

Of the three, only Pittsburgh's Iron City Houserockers have major label albums: the 1979 *Love's So Tough* (MCA) and the 1980 *Have a Good Time (But Get Out Alive)* (MCA). Richmond's Bill Blue Band has two independent label albums: the 1979 *Sing Like Thunder* (Adelphi) and the 1980 *Givin' Good Boys a Bad Name* (Adelphi Records/ P.O. Box 288/ Silver Spring, Md. 20907). Despite sell-out club dates up and down the East Coast, Rhode Island's Beaver Brown only has one single out: "Wild Summer Nights" (Coastline Records/ 1736 Beacon St./ Brookline, Ma. 02146).

The Iron City Houserockers' lead singer, Joe Grushecky, is tall and gangly. Last year he occupied the stage of Washington's Bayou like a basketball center who's not letting anything get by. As the five musicians behind him simmered the introduction to "Pumping Iron," Grushecky let his guitar dangle at his side and addressed the crowd.

"Pittsburgh's a real good city," he said of the band's hometown. "We got all these steel mills down by the river. When you grow up there, you can do two things. You can work like hell to stay out of those mills or you can spend your life pumping iron."

With that, the sextet exploded into a shuddering rock'n'roll protest of those choices. The best had the loud, metallic crunch of a factory but with a joyful surge that no factory ever had. *Pumping iron,* Grushecky sang to that factory beat, *sweatin' steel.* Then he pointed at the young D.C. professionals in the crowd and shouted: *You can never understand how I feel!*

Nevertheless, Grushecky and his band worked hard all night to make them understand. Grushecky writes about the details of working lives without the romantic gauze that Springsteen often wraps around the subject. Grushecky de-

scribes vegging out in front of the tube, getting locked up for a dumb fight or falling in love with an overweight five-and-ten cashier.

These stories are carried by a tough, blues-based rock'n'roll. Marc Reisman's huffing harmonica and Art Nardini's bruising bass reveal the band's past as a blues revival band. But Gil "Duke" Snyder's keyboards add just the right new wave touch. And Eddie Britt's lead guitar has the condensed charge of the Rolling Stones. The few covers the band still does run towards Chuck Berry, Sam Cooke and Jerry Lee Lewis.

Part of the band's blue collar pride is its refusal to turn its back on Pittsburgh, the ultimate blue collar town. They've refused to drop "Iron City" from their name; they've refused to move to New York or Los Angeles. *This town's been dying since the day I was born,* Grushecky sings, *Shops all boarded up and houses lying in a ruin; We got our backs to the wall, got to find a way to win.*

"People from Pittsburgh itself don't believe anyone from Pittsburgh can be any good," says Grushecky, shaking his head between sets. "They say, 'If he's from Pittsburgh, he must just be some dumb honky.'"

As a result, the town was dominated by bands who covered songs from New York and L.A. when the Houserockers formed in 1977. For a while they played old blues classics. "That was going nowhere," Grushecky notes, "it's all been done before and better by the black guys. We decided we wanted to be a modern band. We knew we could rock and we could roll—which are two different things—and I knew I could write songs. We figured if we stuck to it we were bound to get better."

Ironically they got their toehold in The Decade, a bar in Pittsburgh's college section. Eventually the blue collar bars caught on. "Some people think being a bar band has bad connotations," Grushecky remarks, "that it's just people grinding out other people's hits. But we've always played what we wanted to play. Plus you get immediate feedback in a bar. They're right there. We'll take the basic skeleton of a song and play it in bars for two weeks. After two weeks you have a pretty good idea whether the song works or not. If it works there, it's good enough for anyone.

"Pittsburgh is as blue collar a town as there is in the U.S. We've all put in time in shitty jobs; our fathers work in steel mills and coal mines. We live two blocks from the nearest steel mill. Even if we don't work there ourselves, it's all around us. That's the life we lead, so that's what we write about. Basically it's just the truth. If I wrote about California and someone who rode around in a Mercedes like the Eagles do, it would be false, I don't know anything about it.

"Our friends are working class; our parents are working class. The bars we play in are working class. After our first album came out, we got a lot of great reviews, but it didn't really go anywhere. We were back in Pittsburgh doing the same old thing in the same old bars. We were really frustrated, and it all came out in our second album. In a sense we were caught musically just as our friends were in their jobs."

The Iron City Houserockers constantly hear themselves compared to Bruce Springsteen, Southside Johnny and Graham Parker, but they insist it's a case of common backgrounds, not imitation. "We all grew up in the same kind of neighborhoods listening to the same records," argues Grushecky. "I didn't want the comparisons, but now it seems inevitable so I just decided not to be insulted and be flattered. If you're going to be compared, you might as well be compared to the best."

The comparisons are even tougher for Beaver Brown, who are often dismissed as "Springsteen clones." The Rhode Island sextet has Springsteen's roller coaster Spectorized sound. Lead singer and songwriter John Cafferty often prefaces his blue collar beach tales with rambling monologues. They even have a black saxophone player. At Desperado's in Washington this year, one listener requested "Rosalita." Cafferty rolled his eyes and pleaded, "Give me a break. They figure if you got a black sax player and a white singer, you can do 'Rosalita.'" Cafferty—an impish Irish Catholic elf—punched the air, and launched a distinctive original, "The Heat of the Night," that wiped out the Springsteen shadow.

People don't realize that Beaver Brown has been playing this same sound for nine years now, and they befriended Springsteen's group when both were $400 a night bands on the same East Coast bar circuit. If you talk to Cafferty in his dressing room, he'll tell you that other influences are far more important than his friendship with Springsteen. Perhaps the biggest influence is obvious when Beaver Brown launches into the thick harmonies and irrepressible optimism of the Beach Boys' "Fun, Fun, Fun."

Beaver Brown is best described as a tough, gritty East Coast version of the Beach Boys. While the Beach Boys were sheltered teenagers who considered "fun, fun, fun" a birthright, Cafferty is a working class kid who has had to scratch and claw for it. This is reflected in the music where Gary Gramolini's guitar and Pat Lupo's bass scratch and claw at the full harmonies of Michael "Tunes" Antunes' tenor sax and Bobby Cotoia's piano.

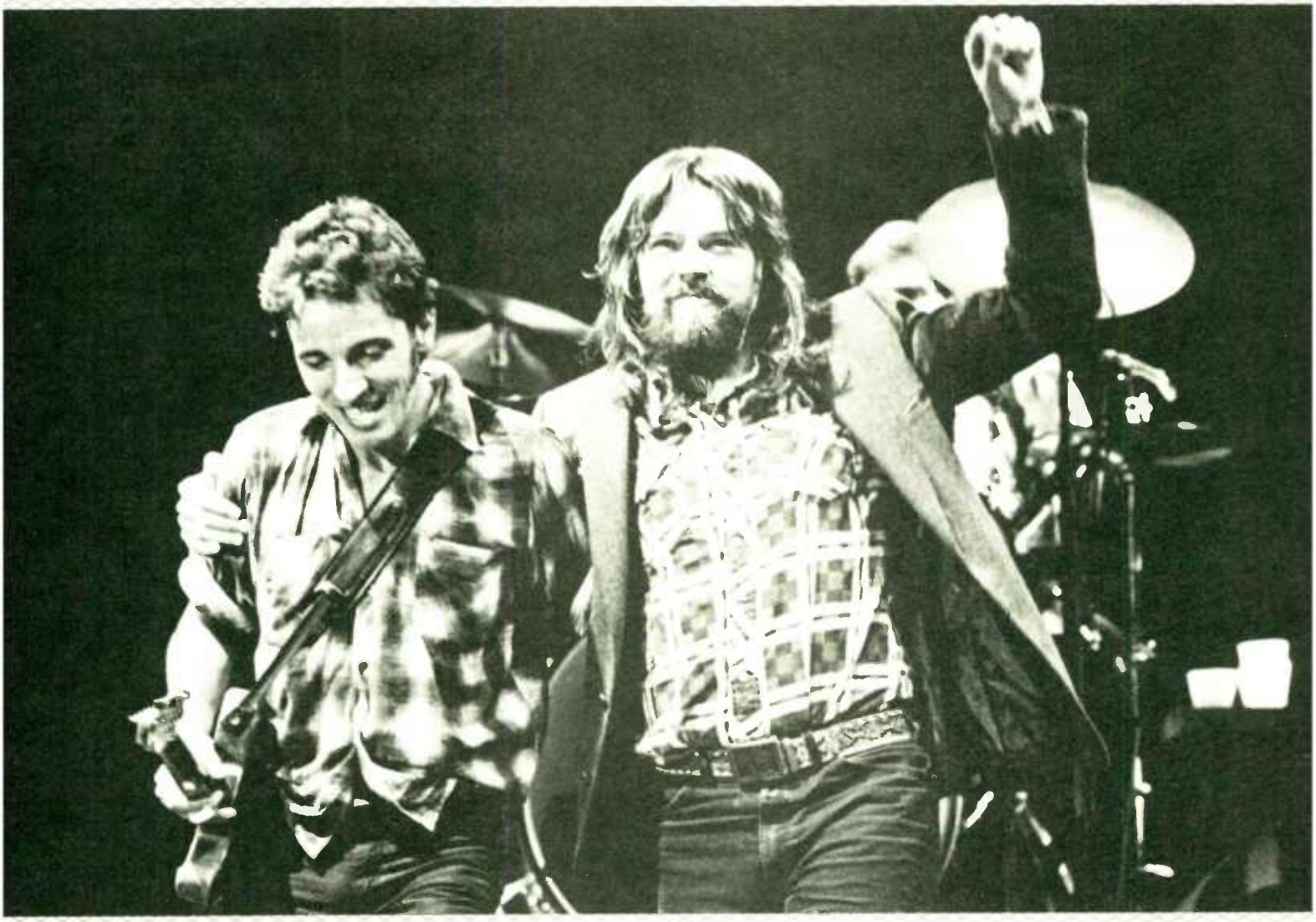
Rhode Island license plates read "Ocean State," and the beach is as important there as in Southern California. But like so much else for New England working class kids, the beach season is transitory, as Cafferty explains in "Wild Summer Nights": *All winter long we had to stand with our backs against the cold But summer's here and the time is right to lose control.*

It's the same dichotomy as Springsteen's contrast between the factory and the highway. Cafferty captures not only the welcome refuge of the beach but also the frustration it's a refuge from. This uneasiness runs through all his songs, but is best captured on "Strangers in Paradise," a haunting song about the elusiveness of dreams.

"The kids we know in Rhode Island hang out on the beach," Cafferty explains, "so that's what we write about. No one else is writing songs about them, so we have to. In fact, there's not that many records out there that hold my attention right now. I'm not hearing the songs I want to hear, so we have to make them ourselves. I like that old music; it reached out to you. It was emotional; it said something. That's what I want to do."

If Joe Grushecky is the Northern millworker version of blue collar rock, Bill Blue is the Southern poor white version. Born in a small North Carolina town and living in Richmond, Blue sings about the underdog view of life in the New South better than anyone since Lnyryd Syknyrd. Blue has a raw, gravelly voice that's a cross between Bob Seger and a grizzly bear worn out by double shifts at a textile mill. Blue learned the blues by playing with Arthur Crudup, but he always employs a couple of hot Memphis soul sound horn players.

The Bill Blue Band uses its R&B-flavored rock'n'roll to



DARRYL FITTARETNA LTD

voice the frustrations of young shift workers at a feverish pitch and then release them with explosive force. Blue writes about the rewards of the working life: *Ain't it funny/ Sometimes you're up/ most times you're low.* The way he sings it, it's obvious he doesn't find it funny at all. He writes about getting off work and slumping down in front of the tube to watch the politicians and stars. When he writes, *Who are your heroes?* he doesn't expect an answer. (The Iron City Houserockers voice the same frustration on "Heroes Are Hard to Find" on their first album.)

He writes about the end of a frustrating work week, when all you want to do is drive to your girl friend's, but then you find out you *can't get no gas.* He writes about the misplaced blame for the normal reactions to workaday routine. *All the mothers hold me to blame,* he wails, *for giving good boys a bad name.*

Sometimes he completely transforms old songs. He took the title line, "Hit the Road, Jack," and gave it new music and new lyrics about a shift worker named Jack and his wife, Pearl, who has a well-heeled lover. With his drooping eyelids and luxurious handlebar moustache, Blue half sings and half tells the story till it builds into a screaming climax worthy of a Tennessee Williams hothouse drama. Similarly, John Hand's "Hard Work" is transformed by Blue's mid-song monologues about all the things he's wanted and how hard it is to get them. As an antidote, Blue leads the crowd at Baltimore's No Fish Today into a hand-shaking, revival tent fervor as he chants his advice: *Gotta be cool!*

"The average working person is my audience," Blue claims. "The guy who works hard all week and has to blow half his money every weekend just to have a good time. The guy who makes $50,000 a year isn't listening to me. So, almost subliminally, I've written for my audience. I know what it's like to hold down that job. I grew up in a working family and worked all the way up till I went professional. Even in the music business, it's a struggle, especially if you have family.

"You see it all the time, especially on the club circuit. I talk to these guys and the constant theme is either they're not working or they have to work too much. If anyone needs a spokesman, it's those people."

BY DAN FORTE

Writing an update on the state of folk music today, in 1981, is a bit like closing the barn door after the barn has burned to the ground, since folk music's obituary could have been written ten years ago, as far as the public and the media are concerned. With all of the musical styles that have come in and out of fashion over the years (occasionally reborn only to be reburied), the isolated Folk Music Boom of the early Sixties now seems as dated as ragtime.

The early Sixties was a unique time when acoustic folk music was actually played on AM radio, and adolescents and their parents listened to the same records. Back then, when college kids looked either like Dobie Gillis or Maynard G. Krebbs, folk music was innocent, optimistic, happy. There were, as there always have been, protest songs, and songs about "the working man," but there were also songs about race horses that "never drank water, and only drank wine." People really believed the words to "This Land Is Your Land."

In this age of sophistication, technology and cynicism, "Puff The Magic Dragon" hasn't got a chance. Folk legends such as Glen Yarbrough and Pete Seeger, groups like Peter, Paul & Mary and the Kingston Trio are that genre's equivalent of rock & roll's Chubby Checker or the Coasters.

The days of the coffeehouse singers are as good as gone, and if you don't believe me, go catch David Crosby's dismal act some time. Stan Freberg collaboratoring with Martin Mull couldn't give a more accurate parody of a dime-a-dozen struggling Hoot Night hopeful than Crosby unwittingly does performance after performance. Most of the successful folk/rock singer/songwriters of the late Sixties and early Seventies have turned to rock (Jackson Browne, James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt), pseudo-jazz (Joni Mitchell), or (in the case of you-know-who) gospel. Graham Nash seems to be one of the few who hasn't strayed too far from his folk roots, realizing that that's his strongest suit.

The truth of the matter is that "folk," just like the word, can be a death knell to record sales—which is ironic, since the opposite used to be the case (remember all those 12-string guitar albums and titles like *Duane Eddy Plays Dylan*?). The term "acoustic" is preferred by most groups, often in conjunction with the clarification, "instrumental."

By far the most inventive, exciting and popular of the acoustic instrumental aggregations is the David Grisman Quartet (nee Quintet). Grisman's "Dawg music"—a seamless blend of bluegrass, swing, classical, and Mid-eastern styles—opened the door for a lot of pale imitations, but a few potential gems shine through the murk. Andy Statman's *Flatbush Waltz* (Rounder) and the *Tim Ware Group* (Kaleidoscope) are probably the strongest compositionally (both led by mandolinists).

Whereas Dawg music (guitarist Tony Rice prefers to call his variation "Spacegrass") is more or less a hybrid of jazz and bluegrass (jazzed up bluegrass, swing played by parking lot pickers), "Newgrass" gets its flavoring from rock. The main progenitors of the form are the Newgrass Revival, led by the amazing multi-instrumentalist Sam Bush. With tour, video and LP (on Paradise) backing Oklahoma rocker Leon Russell, the Revival has been kicked from the festival circuit into the big leagues.

Newgrass is simpler than Dawg music and also relies on vocals (the Revival's real forte). More traditional bluegrass has also gained in popularity somewhat, thanks largely to the more progressive pickers paying homage to their roots and, in the case of Tony Rice, Ricky Skaggs, and David Grisman, recording or reissuing straight bluegrass albums.

1981 saw two comebacks of sorts in the acoustic guitar world. Both John Fahey and Leo Kottke (the founder and champion, respectively, of "American Primitive Guitar") released new LPs—Fahey's, his first live recording ever; Kottke's, his first all-instrumental solo album in a long time. Fahey's *Live in Tasmania* (Takoma) finds the eccentric fingerpicker in fine form, stronger than he's been on vinyl in too long a time. Kottke's *Guitar Music* (Chrysalis) is pretty enough but lacks the depth, the drive of his mentor. It's nice to hear Kottke's return to basics, but at this point he seems to be competing with himself, because no one can match the technique found on his early recordings, not even Leo.

In every college dormitory across the nation, in every stairwell with a good echo, can be found at least one Kottke clone, pummeling a defenseless Martin D-28 in open G tuning with National metal fingerpicks. Few of these can ever hope to rise above the oohs-and-aahs of their roommates, but a couple have taken the Fahey/Kottke/Robbie Basho style to another space and started their own annex to the School of American Primitive Guitar. Probably the two most popular and influential of the breed are Will Ackerman and Alex de Grassi, who are lumped together more because they record for the same label (Ackerman's own Windham Hill Records) than because of any close similarities in guitar technique or style. Both occasionally evoke the same sort of mood with their steel-string instrumentals, but they seem to be coming from two different directions to arrive at the same point. Ackerman is one of the Fahey/Kottke/Basho school but with a much more refined melodic sense, at times approaching a Ralph Towner or a Pat Metheny (Windham Hill has often been compared with the ECM label). Alex de Grassi's sense of melody isn't quite as strong, but his technique is far more intricate, owing some influence to jazz as well as the British school of fingerpickers (John Renbourn, Davey Graham, Bert Jansch).

Ackerman's fourth solo album, the just-released *Passage*, is his most consummate work, and should sell even better than his previous releases, thanks to the exposure received by labelmate George Winston. With *Autumn*, an album comprised of long, pastoral mood pieces for solo acoustic piano, Winston, to everyone's surprise, broke into the jazz and pop charts, and has sold more than 60,000 units in less than a year (making *Autumn* one of the biggest selling releases by an independent label ever).

Winston shares with Ackerman a knack for simplicity and a keen sense of melody and structure. Though his music is usually termed "jazz" (due no doubt in part to the presence of another solo acoustic pianist named Keith Jarrett), Winston prefers the category of "folk piano," something which he may be the sole proponent of.

The British contingent mentioned earlier continues to make beautiful music, both new and traditional, but remains more an influence (at least on this side of the Atlantic) than a contender. Robin Williamson, having disbanded his Merry Band, has toured as a solo act—playing unaccompanied harp, bagpipes, and penny whistle, among other things—with fantastic results. He not only manages to carry a song without accompaniment, his music sounds more focused because of the spareness; remember, he was originally one-half of the Incredible String *Band*.

Another artist who sounds best as a "one man dance band," as he calls it, is John Hartford. When he's not navigating a riverboat down the Mississippi, Hartford can be found at clubs and festivals accompanying his quirky lyrics on solo fiddle, while clog dancing on a sheet of ¾" plywood.

As much of an anachronism as Hartford without being quite as primitive is one Gamble Rogers, a fingerpicker in a league with Doc Watson, a singer with a voice as smooth as brandy, and perhaps the last of the great storytellers. A sort of cross between Will Rogers and a backwoods Tom Waits, the pride of St. Augustine, Florida is as engrossing as a campfire spook story and as gentle as a summer breeze. His live album, *The Warm Way Home* (on Mountain Railroad Records), is not only nostalgic, it's timeless.

Country Music

BY DAN FORTE

Eat more possum, God bless John Wayne.
Seems like everybody is a cowboy these days.
—"Takin It As It Comes" by Jerry Jeff Walker and Bobby Rambo

Country music, 1981. Where do you start? And, more importantly, where do you end?

It really does seem like everybody claims to be a cowboy these days, and would have you believe they were wearing cowboy hats and bandanas long before John Travolta was shaving. The film *Urban Cowboy,* which is to blame for all this denim and gingham, coincided with a flood of Stetsons, designer jeans, cowboy boots, beer—and country music. The two-step and the Cotton-eyed Joe replaced the bump and the New York hustle, and "Gilley bars," complete with mechanical bucking bulls, rose up from the ashes of a thousand disco insurance fires—and were soon frequented by the same people who populated the discos, now wearing different costumes, doing different dance steps.

Sociologists will suggest that the new country music boom is a reflection of the right wing, "Love It Or Leave It" climate that elected Ronald Reagan. But the country musicians that actually helped spawn the Urban Cowboy phenomenon, the artists most responsible for the atmosphere which allowed the movie to be such a smash, were the so-called "progressive country" *outlaws*—Nashville renegades like Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson. (And, remember, the Charlie Daniels Band played at the Carter Inauguration Ball four years earlier.)

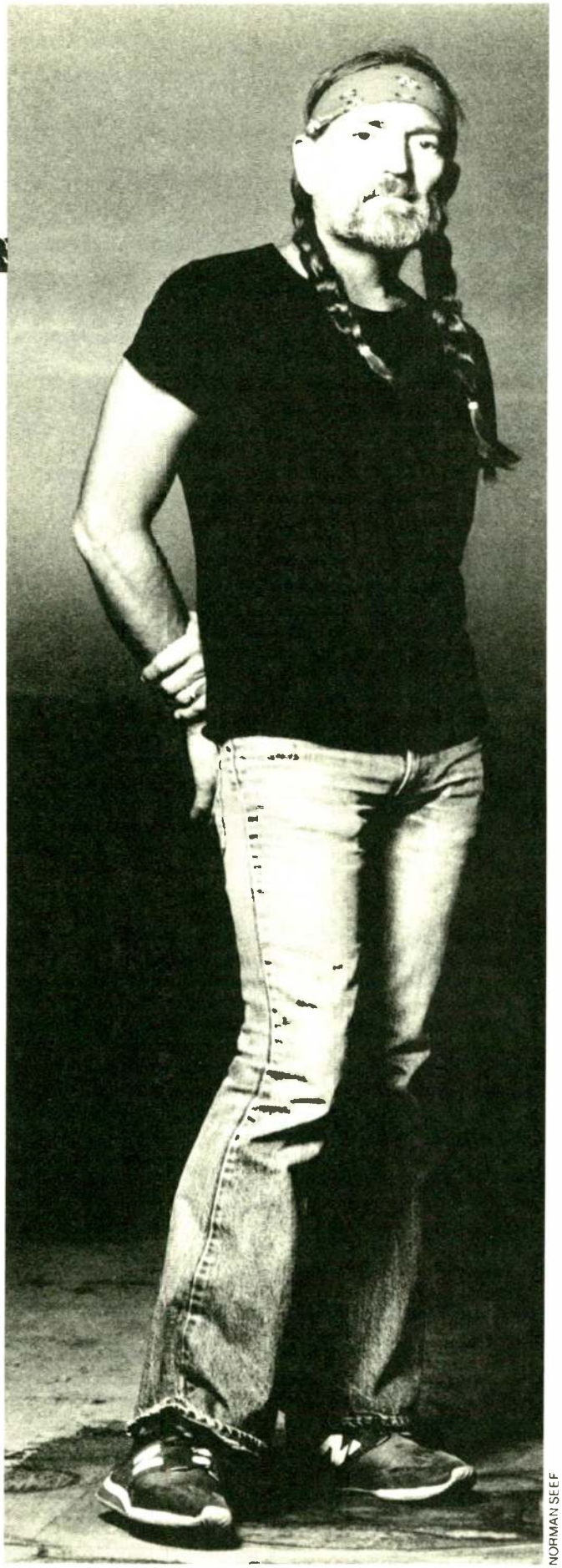
In his career Willie Nelson has gone from Nashville songwriter to progressive country cult figure to super (and movie) star. And he did so before all the hubbub started. Country & western's resident dope-smoking, bearded and braided 40-year-old hippie is a true hero of Americana. Today, Willie can do no wrong, although he occasionally comes close. His collection of standards, *Stardust,* was an unqualified success, but his repeat, *Over The Rainbow,* tastes like leftovers after a banquet. His duet LP with Ray Price, *San Antonio Rose,* is one of the best in either's catalog, but now reports have it that Willie is recording a duo album with, dang 'em, Roger Miller.

The reasons for Nelson's enormous popularity, with country and noncountry fans alike, are hard to pinpoint, but his melodic accessibility and personal charm are two obvious main ingredients. While Dolly Parton's country music career now seems almost secondary to her position as a household word and talk show personality (thanks in part to her role in the movie *Nine To Five*), Willie's movies (*Electric Horseman* and *Honeysuckle Rose*) have made him seem, not bigger than life, but *more* real and ordinary, if that's possible. And, as if his singing, songwriting, and guitar playing weren't enough, that sucker can even act.

A few years ago, I asked Willie just what was so different about progressive country music, as opposed to the C&W "establishment." "I think the basic change," he said, "was taking a rock & roll rhythm section and putting country lyrics with it, and then something else—that third ingredient, whatever it is—and you've got progressive country. I may have been one of the first to use the phrase, because I kept wanting to change the name of our band from Record Man, which we used to be called. I thought about The Progressive Hillbillies, or The Progressive Jazzbillies. The word progressive was on my mind way back then, and I associated it with the kind of music I had in mind. If there is a label for what we're doing, I guess progressive country would have to be it. But it's just a rock & roll rhythm pattern with country lyrics, and then something else. And that third thing has to do with whoever's playing it."


BEVERLY PARKER
Rosanne Cash

"Crossover" is, of course, the buzz word the industry throws around whenever the various blends of rock and country are discussed. And, rightly so, most artists abhor being merchandised with such labels. "It's so calculated," says Carlene Carter. Carlene and step-sister Roseanne Cash are two of the strongest of the new breed of female country singer, although one has to wonder if the C&W tag would even be applied were it not for their impressive family heritage. Roseanne is, of course, Johnny Cash's daughter, and Carter is the daughter of June Carter and Johnny's step-daughter. The step-sisters each recently released hot, electrifying LPs, both produced by their husband/rock stars—Carlene's *Musical Shapes* by former Rockpile bassist Nick Lowe and Roseanne's *Seven Year Ache* by former Hot Band guitarist Rodney Crowell. The instrumentation on each (comprised of members of the producers' former bands) is decidedly rock (in Carter's case, a sort of neo-rockabilly), with no fiddle and very little steel guitar. Hank De Vito's steel playing on *Seven Year Ache,* in fact, leans more toward the distorted David Lindley rock sound than the more traditional country style of, say, Buddy Emmons. Carlene Carter describes her style as "country but it's got that sex in it. Rock & roll is 'sex' music." Though she was born into country music's most prestigious family, Carter, now in her mid-twenties, grew up on the English rock she heard over



NORMAN SEEFF

the radio; "I liked the Yardbirds, the Stones, Hendrix, Clapton, the Beatles, Joplin—I even liked the Monkees," she reveals.

Another so-called country crossover husband/wife producer/artist team is Emmylou Harris and Brian Ahern. But while her earlier LPs were definitely in the Byrds/Burrito Brothers country-rock mold, Harris' recent efforts, *Evangeline* and the acoustic *Roses In The Snow,* are 100% country music. Emmylou has, in fact, turned down interviews with the "rock press," preferring to be represented in the C&W magazines. While Harris still sounds a bit self-conscious singing bluegrass standards like "The Darkest Hour Is Just Before Dawn" (she actually sounds more at home singing harmony behind Roseanne Cash), her records and concerts consistently feature one of the best back-up bands anywhere, appropriately called the Hot Band. This ever-evolving unit has in the past featured such luminaries as James Burton and Albert Lee, and is currently the showcase for the abundantly talented Ricky Skaggs, who has recorded several fine LPs of his own.

While it seems every country singer alive is cashing in to some degree on the Urban Cowboy syndrome—some justifiably (like Mickey Gilley), others not so much (Johnnie Lee)—one who refused to pander or change, and hopefully never will, is Merle Haggard. Hag gets my vote for country artist of the year for his consistently fine output and, most of all, his conviction. I was in a record store the other day and noticed Merle's new live set, *Rainbow Stew.* "Is this any good?" I asked my friend behind the cash register. "Ever hear a Merle Haggard album that wasn't?" he replied. Amen. Because of his western swing leanings, some critics have dubbed Merle Haggard's music "country jazz," which is a bit of an overstatement. If there is such a thing as country jazz, then Asleep At The Wheel is its sole practitioner. More than any band, the Wheel would seem strong candidates to benefit from all the Urban Cowboy hoopla; but they simply refused to stoop to that sort of mechanical bull-shit. Asleep At The Wheel are, of course, the kings of western swing among other things. The Wheel is the best dance band in the country, the masters of the 500- to 1,000-seaters. The band's personnel has changed with the regularity of the oil in their shamshackle tour bus, with the group's founder, Ray Benson, the only remaining original member. Their first (and last) album for MCA, *Framed,* their eighth in eleven years, contains almost none of the style they're most famous for, western swing a la Bob Wills & the Texas Playboys. "Look, I could put out a cosmic cowboy, western swing record right now and make a fortune," says Benson, "but I'm not into that anymore. We already did those records."

Although his record company, MCA, released *The Best of Jerry Jeff Walker* a year earlier, Jerry Jeff returned to produce his most stunning work ever in 1981. *Reunion,* on MCA's South Coast subsidiary, was recorded in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, utilizing the famous studio rhythm section of Jimmy Johnson, David Hood, Roger Hawkins, and producer Barry Beckett, along with Bobby Rambo, Bonnie Bramlett, and a cameo appearance by Willie Nelson. In a year full of comebacks—Mickey Gilley, George Jones briefly, and a renewed energy from Johnny Cash and Loretta Lynn—the return of the old five-and-dimer stands out as the most significant, and the most deserved.

These days it's cool to be country, it's hip to be a cowboy. Elvis Costello's next album will reportedly be comprised of Patsy Cline covers and C&W standards; the follow-up to *Chipmunk Punk* is—you guessed it—*Urban Chipmunk.* Next year or the year after another musical style will be in vogue. The fashion will surely pass, but country music has always been here and is sure to survive this, its own, fad just as it has survived so many others.

BY FRED SCHRUERS

Since his recent notices have offered us a new-and-improved Joe Ely, I have to begin by swearing on a stack of ticket stubs: I've been an Ely fan since well before the Clash made him an honorary Sandinista. Now that this West Texas boy has been lionized in England, taken lessons in stagecraft from Joe Strummer, traded his pedal steel player for a sax man, and generally rocked up the whole package, I must admit I liked him better in my heart when the armadillo shit was fresher on his boots.

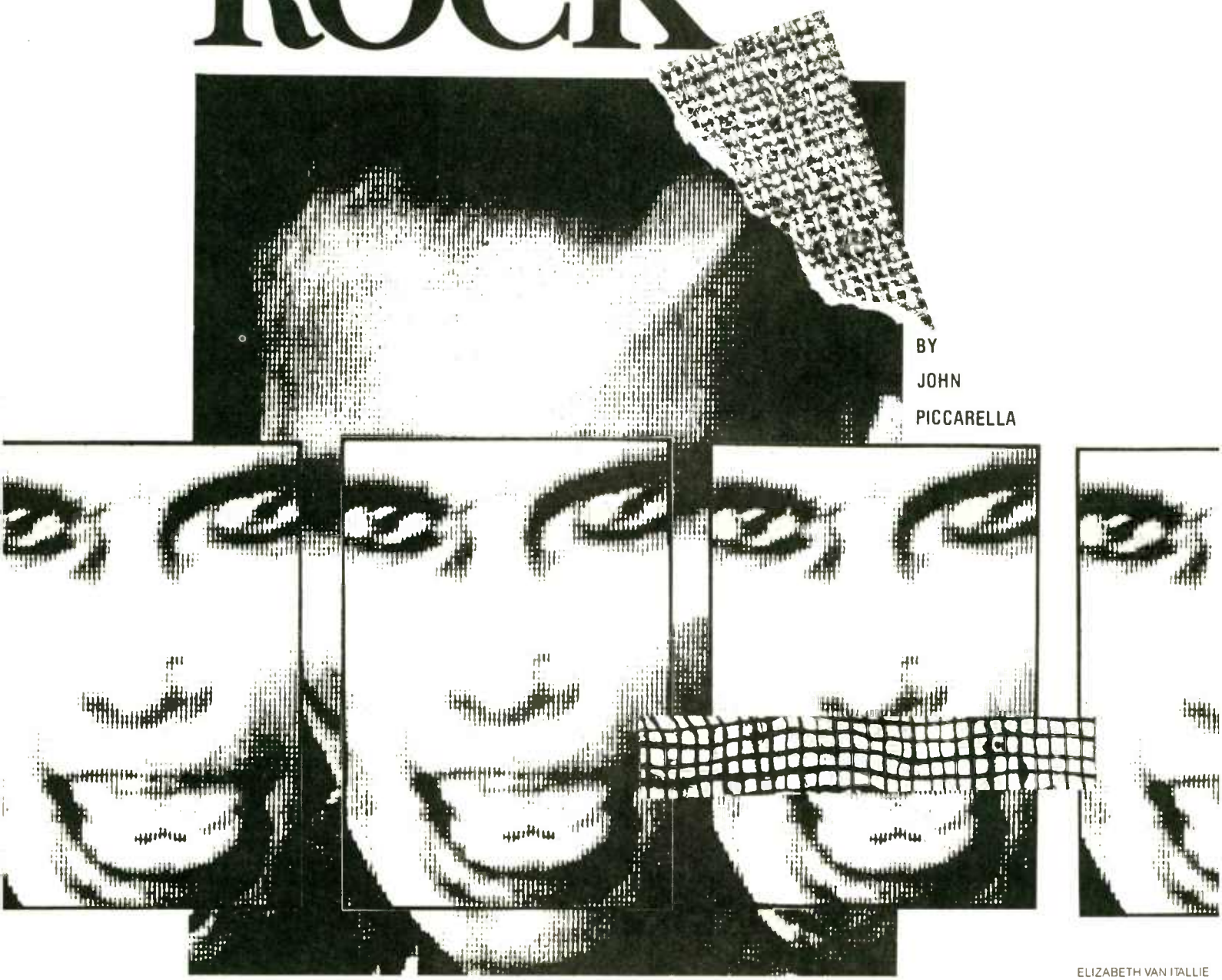
The most impressive thing about Ely's Bottom Line was its energy. Somebody seems to have fitted him with pistons under each heel. He leaves the mike chest-high in its stand and bends to it, creating an effect of a bull mastiff on a leash dragging the band behind him. This effect is true to the spirit of his current LP, *Must Notta Gotta Lotta*, and Joe boldly commenced his set with four straight tunes from that album. "Hard Livin'," the opener, is a good precis of Ely's most appealing gifts—part of the song is hard rockabilly singing over a train whistle guitar, part is the kind of crooning that smacks of big redneck barrooms like Gilley's.

He followed with Roy Brown's "Good Rockn' Tonight," a number I've previously seen covered by Elvis Presley (Win) and Bruce Springsteen (Place). Joe's band, essentially the same unit as on the album, packed considerable wallop but left most of the body English to their leader. Perhaps their most impressive work came on Jimmie Gilmore's expansive "Dallas," with bassist Michael Robberson, accordionist Ponty Bone and sax player Smokey Joe Miller taking turns getting hot, then stepping back. The breaks didn't seem stagey in the context of the song, which wraps a string of cliches into some effectively bittersweet poesy (*Dallas is a jungle/ But Dallas gives a beautiful light*).

After pounding deftly through "I Keep Gettin' Paid the Same," they jammed aggressively on back-to-back covers of "Not Fade Away" and "Matchbox," with Joe inciting the audience to hiss like snakes. The set's frenetic pace made the entire event seem less like a romp than a race; you got the idea that Joe and band were thinking they could take on anybody if they could just get through this early show fast and mean. A couple of Ely's signature tunes—"Standin' At A Big Hotel" and "Fingernails" were not quite sufficient sop to this veteran fan. Those who showed up for the later show apparently were treated to ballads like "West Texas Waltz" and "Honky Tonk Masquerade"—stuff that carries a poignancy well suited to Ely's warm singing. He can move down the fast lane better than most; my only carp is that I left that night before Ely's good sense told him to ease up. I think he knows he'll go farther that way.

CHRIS WALTER/RETNA LTD

POST punk BRITISH ROCK



BY JOHN PICCARELLA

ELIZABETH VAN ITALLIE

Encouraged by trendy press, the post-punk English scene has been a maze of fads, crazes and revivals. Punk's essence, the forced forward motion of its rhythm, has continued to invigorate the music, while artier styles have embellished the atmosphere—and the dress code, that important, diverse and divisive component of English teen sociology. Punk's pessimism, while continuing to inform the politics of major bands like the Jam and the Clash, has given way to an aggressive positivism, signalled by the reactionary dance-crazy ska bands that were the last big thing.

Currently the most popular new group, Adam and the Ants, borrow flamboyant costumes and adventurer poses from pirate and American Indian legends, in a celebration of noble savagery. They spearhead a movement called New Romantics in which sartorial style is more important than musical content. With two drummers, the Ants work from snareless rhythms that recall both Indian "war dances" and Captain Beefheart. The sound is fleshed-out with tribal chants and an impressive variety of guitar voices that range from Hendrix to Public Image Ltd. Their primal, almost ceremonial songs, and "we're all warriors" sloganeering invites anarchic vibes. Catch-phrases like "Antmusic" and "Antpeople" lend their audience a fanatical sense of belonging to their *Lord of the Flies* Utopia. Their disregard for other music, as superbly anthemized in "Antmusic,"—*"Unplug the jukebox and do us all a favor . . ."*—marks their threatening cultism as fascistic, though the blatantly campy sex-image aura is clearly rhetorical, having the same kind of appeal as *The Rocky Horror Show.*

Blitz club owner and New Romantic guru Steve Strange fronts Visage and also takes to fantastic costuming of the occult decadent variety. Supported by Midge Ure and Billy Currie from Ultravox, and Dave Formula and John McGeoch of Magazine (McGeoch recently joined Siouxsie and the Banshees) Strange's mannered vocals are surrounded by electronic orchestrations. Based on robot-disco rhythms borrowed from Kraftwerk, Visage, though more sophisticated than Adam and the Ants, is merely stylish fluff.

Equally fluffy and even more stylish, the Teardrop Explodes, like Visage, is essentially lead singer Julian Cope, with backing musicians. Dominated by an intricately arranged mixture of trumpets and producer David Balfe's keyboards, *Kilimanjaro* provides an aurally engaging setting for Cope's genuinely achieved vocal hooks. "Sleeping Gas," "Treason," and especially "When I Dream" were all great singles, and the newest "Reward" offers Teardrop's punkiest rhythms and most classic rhythm-and-blues horn arrangement. These songs are highlights of *Kilimanjaro*'s bright and consistent sound.

Echo and the Bunnymen are related to Teardrop via leader Ian McCulloch, who was originally a member of Teardrop Explodes and co-wrote "Books" (which both groups have recorded) with Cope. But Echo and the Bunnymen stick to three-chord sixties rock and a straightforward rhythm and lead guitar instrumental lineup. Their two LPs, *Crocodiles* and *Heaven Up Here* offer a much sparer, darker version of reality than McCulloch's former group, although both bands are strongly influenced by the most apocalyptic Morrisonian Doors' visions. Echo and the Bunnymen's guitar-centered hallucinogenic sound is true to the basic materials of both punk and acid rock.

With song titles like "India," "We Love You," and "Flowers" and a name like Psychedelic Furs, you'd expect real hippie music. But even more than the Bunnymen, with a hard beat, gritty guitars and Johnny Rotten vocal style, the Furs are pure and powerful punk, trashing flower power the way Roxy Music trashed fifties rockers. And because they don't sound psychedelic at all, they are the reference standard that gives the lie to the revival. *Talk Talk Talk,* their second LP, shows the Furs drifting toward an art rock style and vaguely New Romantics visual look.

Labelled the next big thing, both by themselves and by much of the rock press, the young Irish group U2 recombines elements of punk, pop and art-rock, achieving at times both the hard edge of a group like the Psychedelic Furs and the dreamy elegance of the Teardrop Explodes. Their debut album *Boy* mixes slowed-punk 1-2 drumming and ringing, dense guitar harmonics borrowed from Public Image Ltd. with strong pop vocal hooks and teenage visionary lyrics in a glitteringf and spacious production. The balance is carefully orchestrated between The Edge's guitar work and Bono Vox's vocals to create a poetic atmosphere that might seem precious if not for the tough-minded rhythm section. The band's

best trick is the chiming glockenspiel or xylophone doodling that rings from a distance through the guitars, recalling both Phil Spector's and dub master Augustus Pablo's use of this instrumentation.

Coexisting alongside the psychedelic revival, almost like Motown growing up with the British invasion, is a singular revivalist group called Dexy's Midnight Runners, and its splinter group, The Bureau. Punkish and rough-cut like the ska bands, the Runners are a full-blown soul revue, characterized by utterly classic and authentic horn arrangements and a guitarless rhythm. As both parody and homage, the torch song fervor of vocals recalls Bryan Ferry in both style and intent, though they lack his polish. *Searching for the Young Soul Rebels*, as its title suggests, is about trying to find love in the numbing depression of post-punk British teen culture. Mixing upbeat horn-teased romps with blues dirges, Dexy's Midnight Runners wring life out of these cliches.

Steve Strange of Visage

BY VAN GOSSE

Every three months or so the English musical world, which is dominated not by radio, as in the States, but by a handful of weekly papers (all with immense circulations—the biggest, *NME,* was at 240,000 the last time I looked) which discover the Next Big Thing. Sometimes they're right (Gary Numan, the Specials, each of whom was extremely chart-dominant in the U.K. for a while) and sometimes it's a dud (the notorious "mod revival" of 1979). Right now, across the water there's a lot of tentative nosing around about a "psychedelic revival," and it seems very logical as the Brits have of late exhumed and exhausted virtually every other remotely interesting pop genre of the past twenty-five years: ska, sixties pop, rockabilly, the list goes on and on. Yet there's something wrong with this too. Psychedelia, hippie music, acid rock, whatever you want to call it, was part of something much more long-lived and powerful than a fashion or a fad, something that cannot just be blithely conjured with a Nehru jacket and a few peyote buttons.

First, to the bands. The most famous of them by far are the Psychedelic Furs, who've been around for years but who are only now being properly "interpreted." Yes, it's true, the Furs do have a light show, and songs with mystical titles and obscure meanings like "Sister Europe," "India," "Flowers." But really, there's far more of Bowie' invocation-of-the-seance ritualism a la "Heroes" in their sound than of the goofy chiming weirdness of, say, the Electric Prunes' "I Had Too Much to Dream Last Night." The Furs have too much of a hard, thudding beat and not enough wildly spiritual flailing to really evoke the good old days. And they've got nowhere near enough hair. The other band oft-cited is U-2, whose live style has been described as going from "very epic" to "extremely epic." That's about it, really: U-2, like many other English bands of the past few years, have discovered that they can trick up the echoing minimalist bigbeat of the post-punk era with sound effects, chants, poetic declamation, et cetera, all of which does indeed bring to mind "psychedelic" excesses and experiment. But that's like saying employing a harmonica ipso facto makes any group a blues band. It ain't the meat, it's the motion, buster, and the true analogy to the summer of love lies elsewhere.

Picture this: a distinct group of restless, disaffected youths seize upon a noisily uncommercial "new music" that attacks the sickness of the world they inhabit, instead of counterposing fantasies and colored lights the way Pop Music usually does. It is created by a vanguard of experimental amateurs who don't know what they're doing and don't care, because they're mad or bored as hell. It's time for something that cuts to the bone, and when a few record companies take the plunge, this "new thing" hits like a ton of bricks, and before you can say "youth-culture-megabucks," the "rebels" have limos and adoring publics and it's business as usual, because this *is* a business, remember?

SIMON FOWLER/RETNA LTD

Psychedelic Furs

Here's the point: This is either America (San Francisco) in 1966-1967 and/or England (London) in 1976-1977; you pick it; both fit the bill.

I hear a symphony of objection. Didn't the London punks four years ago say they hated hippies, peace, and love, and were out to destroy all that "long-haired marijuana music?" Yes, but what they really detested was the hollow shell of hippiedom—the ornamental, pretentious and effete thing it had become post-Woodstock. By 1974 the ideas and totems of the Sixties were deformed symbols of an Establishment orthodoxy; that which had to be attacked.

The similarities between The Age of Aquarius and The Age of Black Leather are not simply vague theoretical analogies. "Somebody To Love" is much more of a soul sister to "God Save The Queen" than you might think. Both songs were marching, charging anthems for a whole generation; both are saying "take this, and us, *seriously*" or maybe just "we mean it, man"—the very words of John L. Rotten himself.

Their common origin and meaning lies in the fact that both movements were born out of an intense, peculiar frustration and tension. You won't find it in the great watershed rock 'n' roll years of 1956 or 1964, and certainly not in 1980. American college kids in the mid-Sixties had known nothing but the family/career/consumer culture of the Cold War era. They'd been too young for Elvis and Chuck Berry, and the

Beatles and the Stones, no matter how great, were still a *British* "Invasion." Suddenly there was the reality of the draft and a vicious, imperialistic war facing them. Under these conditions assorted dropouts, art students, and ex-folkies came to the fore—people like Paul Kantner, Jim Morrison, and Jerry Garcia who wanted to do their own thing: a real, weird, hick, American thing.

A decade later English working class kids were stuck with only the corpse of hippie music to listen to, Heavy Metal and Progressive Rock. Much worse than this, even, was the grimness and bitterness of proletarian life in a society and economy much older and more diseased than ours has ever been. All the early punks ranted on about no jobs, no hope, no future, no nothing because that's what they saw all around them—and so they quite literally spat in its face. What is common to both these spontaneous reactions, then, is an extraordinary disgust and despair out of which comes a galvanising solidarity and anger.

What about the music itself? What, if any, is the real connection, there? Less obvious than the sociology of protest described above (and a lot more interesting), it only requires a little digging to see that Janis the Pearl and Sid the Vicious were brother and sister under the skin, so to speak—as well as in every strangled, anguished yelp they screamed over a drug mad band to an insane, thrill-hungry adolescent crowd.

Look at how the Jorma Kaukonens and the Jimi Hendrixes approached *sound itself*: like Steve Jones (Pistols) or Mick Jones (Clash) or Pete Shelley (Buzzcocks); they conceived of it as something to be fueled and revved and built—the louder and harder the better. The best "acid-rock" challenged all restraint and was as noisy and arrogant and grand as punk itself. Though it was not at its best all that often, it's as plain as the nose on Pete Townshend's face that the will behind it wanted to push beyond substance. The down and dirty roots both era share is clearest when one compares the two representative embryos: the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco in 1966 and the Roxy in London in 1976. Both were, equally, International Palaces of Sweat and Funk, ultimate dance-until-you-drop-then-drop-something-and-dance-some-more joints. Whether the typical guy or girl had hair to his/her toes or no hair at all, safety pins in cheeks or American flag on eyelids, he/she/it was shouting and shaking and feeling transformed, part of something different and special that spoke only him or her, and was made by people very much like the bugger in question, people he could easily imagine himself as.

Public Image, Ltd.

Finally, here's the coup de grace, the smoking gun of a direct historical connection: the final crescendo of the late Sixties' thunder and din in America were two bands from the grimy heartland of industry, Detroit. One was the avowedly "revolutionary" MC5, and the other was the Psychedelic Stooges (they shortened the name before the first LP), featuring a seventeen year-old singer named Iggy Pop. Every observer of British Punk at its founding traces its roots and inspiration directly to these wild, white-noise hippie bands of 1969. The Sex Pistols made this very clear by releasing only one non-original song during their entire active career: an epic version of the Stooges' "No Fun." The evidence is in—the punks were nothing but the unexpected bastards of the flower children. What a family. Case closed.

The funny thing is that in both cases such heady brews didn't travel well at all. In the U.K. "psychedelia" was no more than a Summer of Love Vacation, beards and bells for six months and then English Youth were back to their usual tricks: forming gangs and beating the bejesus out of each other at soccer stadiums and concerts. Conversely, real "Punk" as a mass movement of alienated kids was dead from Day One in America, a complete fiasco. The public wanted a Saturday Night Dance Romance a la John Travolta (nothing wrong with that). Of course a few years later came Blondie, "My Sharona", "Pop Muzik", the rise of rock discos and all that, but it wasn't the same thing as the Anarchy across the water in 1976.

The New Wave succeeded in a small way here because it finally came to be seen as *fashionable*. And that is all it was: fashion, fad, style, a wave—not a seachange. When Ivy League girls are coordinating the streaks of pink and mauve or green in their hair with their fingernail polish and sweatersets, then you know a social revolution is *not* in the offing. Indeed it may never be again, for the pop world has become so diffuse in this country that unity around one sound and idea is hard to imagine.

So now it's 1981, and we're very far from that rare unity, a joining of music and listeners, where one reflects, speaks for, *is* the other. To tout a disparate bunch of cultish English bands with no social base, no raison d'etre other than just playing, as akin to a great ecstatic flash-fire in the history of pop is ridiculous. All the light shows in the world will not reclaim that moment when the youth (comfortable, white) of America emerged from their cocoon. A "psychedelic revival" has about as much validity in and of itself as Beatlemania. Honor the dead, honor the testament of those who *could* see for miles—move on.

New Wave

BY BART TESTA

If the Punk-New Wave label ever conveyed the impression of coherence in the music or politics, this was long gone before 1981. This year the terms still endured but only as marketing rhetoric and generic terms guiding the P-NW audience through their neobohemian fashions. As a set of fashions, the genre hangs in there and this is the main advantage in keeping up the fiction that such a thing as P-NW actually exists. Of course rock critics ritually despise fashions, smacking as they do of sex and consumption. But without an enduring fashionability, the P-NW hodge-podge of music, clothes and graphics would never hold its core of enthusiasts or enjoy the tolerance for novelty that P-NW has continued to offer a rock scene otherwise constricted in the last year. With its continuing marginal success, P-NW has become the sole zone where rockers can safely experiment. In short, P-NW has achieved the status of an established avant garde—febrile, prolix, ever questionable but extremely valuable until some other breakout movement takes shape.

P-NW remained marginal this year because the big hits didn't keep coming. Even if *Sandinista* convinced the bottomline boys the Clash could be (as one publicist put it) "radio-playable" on AOR-FM stations, high expectations were generally followed by modest sales. Remarkably, no one seemed overly disappointed and tolerance for the slow-build was high as P-NW continued to fragment its once glorious monochrome into a variety of sub-genres.

There was dub, reggae, ska and, leading the pack towards rhythm, Brian Eno's African anthropology. No one denied that David Byrne's recasting himself as the Global Village idiot after three albums from the neurotic high rise was a neat escape from his artistic impasse. Byrne waving the flag of eternal recurrence on Talking Heads' *Remain in Light* did mark a major change in program. *Same as it ever was* chanted Byrne, indicating more afoot than the addition of a percussion section. Though how this nervous college kid intends to descend into the tribal unity, rather than trip along like a tourist, is something *Remain in Light* won't tell you.

Somehow, the Byrne-Eno sketchbook for *Remain, My Life in the Bush of Ghosts,* fell into a critical contest with the Talking Heads' effort. Burnished with Eno's quiescent style, the accumulated documents—radio tapes, African pop, a sermon—took on the shape of mildly surrealist pastiche. The apparent modesty of the album gave *Bush* the edge over *Remain,* though the latter had strong confirmation in concert. Even if it proved dispensible, after 50 replays, *Remain* was the real breakthrough album while *Bush* was just another canvas on which the artist Eno dabbled.

The importance of *Bush,* however, may be comparable to Eno's introduction of electric trance music in the mid-70's. This year that style, popularized by Gary Numan (whose *Living Ornaments '79,* a concert-set goodbye, is a final shard), fell into its nadir with John Foxx, Cowboys International and assorted other forgettable synthesizer bands. Basically a variant of psychedelia passing through the Kraftwerk dehumanization filter, this stuff temporarily lent P-NW an arty theatrical finish which went well with the comix and sub-sci-fi cohorts of the movement.

The other rhythm-based school, which has no close affinities with the Talking Heads, is the British ska revival, led by the Specials, Madness and The Selecter and The Beat. Terrifically competent having fun with this mid-60's island dance music, these bands met the narrow demands of the style with energy and British resourcefulness. Ska has great advantages over reggae as a black pop form; the rhythms are faster, there is plenty of room for solos and the style has no connection with Rasta theology. As a result, the new ska could be party music free of sanctimony and ritual requirement. It's no wonder, then, that The Specials often come close to roadhouse rocking or that The Selecter is now P-NW's finest neobar band. British rock (never mind P-NW) desperately needed a fresh source in black pop and the ska bands have delivered.

Moving in the opposite direction towards becoming a big-time concert attraction on an American scale, The Clash continued to push reggae ground out of shape, and picked up American R'n'B moves as well with *Sandinista!* This triple album was probably the big event this year. Following *London Calling,* the new LP projected The Clash not only as frontrunner of P-NW but also beggared the question of who could be in pursuit. The Clash's political pose—leftist epic-forgers of the geopolitic—seems increasingly to derive from the movies. As bulletins from the front, "Charlie Don't Surf" (a line from *Apocalypse Now*), "The Magnificent Seven" and "Ivan Meets G.I. Joe" are nifty parody but one suspects The Clash are trying to recast America's new militarism as a function of the country's dumb parochialism. England may be static but The Clash's targets are only longingly recalled by America where fear and swagger are the functions of a fresh xenophobia for which John Wayne is no longer the telling symbol.

However, the problems with The Clash's ambitions have more to do with the newly expansive style of *Sandinista!* than their politics. The same found-object technique found on *Bush of Ghosts* turns up on *Sandinista!,* deployed as punctuation between songs late on the lp. Together with the heavy echo, dense mix and (yuk) Ellen Foley vocals, these exotic footnotes make the album disappointingly distant. Meant to be aural correlatives to the band's ironies, this material shows signs of a failed try for epic texture. The Clash used to convey pathos along with their jokes but Strummer's ironic disguises here, as on "The Sound of Sinners." capsize the album with smugness and the montages drag the damage down near the

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

waterline. Had *Sandinista!* been a double, we could have heard the lp sounded off "Police Off My Back," "The Equalizer," "Something for England" or "Junco Partner." But, as a triple, the lp is muffled, even diffuse—the last thing one wants from The Clash.

The band also had problems in New York, which the press took to mean they have "reputation trouble." But, since they were booked into Bond's, a Times Square barn, and tried to offer local P-NW acts as openers, the ticket sales and stiff resistance their guests met from the New York crowd were only expected snafus. Even "ambitious" albums that turn out merely prolix and cries of "Sell Out!" can't obscure The Clash as P-NW's standard bearer. That they are also in some danger of becoming today's Pink Floyd tomorrow given the subversive success of their career shouldn't disturb anyone yet. As long as the social conditions The Clash play to are so reactionary, their call to anger plays well.

Onward to the depths. The Plasmatics make one wonder why no one thought to apply the aesthetics of the Sex Show to rock'n'roll earlier. Wendy Orlean Williams' 42nd Street background is not really at issue; Andrea True was a porno star before her disco career and applied none of her movie experience. Williams, though, has thrown her previous experience into the Plasmatics headbanging stage shows with alarming gusto. She got busted in a celebrated anti-rock campaign, providing the band with a desperately needed legitimacy only the police (they were obviously moved by the act) could muster. Hopeless musically, but enthusiastic in the areas of car-exploding and self-mutilation, The Plasmatics provide another footnote in P-NW's steady contributions to novelty acts, following hard on—if not logically after—Devo and the B-52's. On the other hand, they are just an X-rated Kiss.

Elsewhere, bricks were added to the fortress of British songwriting through the work of XTC and the Boomtown Rats. How far does the high level of XTC's *Black Sea* extend in either direction from this conveniently well-spiked album? XTC artfully combines pop dramatics and the avant angularity of older New Wavers like Television and early Tom Petty. To one side of XTC, The Jam's *Sound Effects* switched them from apocalyptic witnesses in the Punk manner to a tough pop group. The Jam shimmer with Beatle-Yardbird guitars over a rhythm section that floats like a butterfly and slams like a steamshovel. More heavy-bottomed than the decorative Rats, The Jam haven't quite perfected their hustle but they successfully intrude on Graham Parker's territory while Parker himself has still to pull together anything as strong as *Sound Effects* since his debut.

British bands have never been successfully funky—which is part of the problem with *Sandinista!*—and The Jam hold to the tradition that says black pop forms should be played with loud guitars and at damn-the-bazookas crazy. The Who's long-distance running as arbiters of this Anglo taste was one of the things challenged by the Punks. Peter Townshend once confirmed The Jam as appropriate juniors in the game—and so they finally are on *Sound Effects.*

XTC is something more, another try at the mannered ironies along The Move, Roxy Music, David Bowie matrix. Dense arrangements, "literary" lyrics and disingenuous affectations are parts of this Noel-Coward-goes-to-Samuel-Delanyville Show. XTC's variants are matters of sly melodramatic decoration, quizzical extensions and local color. Where XTC surpass their models is in avoiding the mannerism of a Bowie or Ferry while devising ambiguous surfaces for their ballet of imagery, character sketches and hinted narratives.

Now evicted from P-NW for reconquering Roger McGuinn's treasure island and mounting Dylan's organ over the beach, Tom Petty told stories on *Hard Promises* and, generally, joined the Springsteen-centered mainstream. This suggests that at one end of the XTC axis the maw of the breadwinner oven opens wide. 999 joined this flow with *Concrete,* even opening the album with a cop from Ennio Marricone, as did The Brains and others. Why Marricone, the Italian Western composer? It's a conventional Anglo-rock gambit to half-jokingly take a swipe at Euro-Cowboyism. In assembling a poppish rock, such moves have become almost required. 999, The Brains, et al. now run the required ruts—and they are quite good, almost as good as Squeeze, who are turning into a great songwriters' band.

The big brother of this fashion remains Elvis Costello. *Trust* marked Costello's retreat from the prolix miniaturism of *Get Happy!* Costello was writing terrific pop songs again and performing them with a full range of dynamics over a wide range of styles. It seemed the only part of his reputation Costello now feels he has to live up to is bitter brilliance. And, set up as a cabaret performance, he delivered both with *Trust* and his comparatively easy-going concert performance.

P-NW felt the seductions of the mixing board strongly this year. Last year, Deborah Harry became a new Linda Ronstadt, a safe pop dutchess, while Linda herself moved on to Gilbert and Sullivan after failing to become the new Jackie. The freeze-dried Blondie of "Call Me" left them with nowhere to go but upscale. The desiccated Blondie of *Autoamerican* aches to be perverse and "T-Birds" would have been a salvageable car song but for Harry's rap at the end which bears an unhappy resemblence to Joan Baez complaining about *Time* magazine. Elsewhere, the lp is full of fancy vocal digressions but these only serve to highlight Harry's painfully obvious limits. Like a lot of the girl singers her voice echos, Harry is a terrific light rock singer armed with a wonderful vocal persona who feels compelled to show she can "really" sing. Like Marlene Dietrich, unfortunately.

Also creatures of the studio this year, Johnny Lyndon's post-Pistols band, Public Image Ltd., delivered *The Flowers of Romance.* For all the railing on his part, the ironic invocation of Baudelaire fits this *musique noir.* Scrambled, thin guitars and processed sound behind the big, compulsively repetitious drumming leads PiL into bad gestalt and oneiric scenery. Though slightly more energetic, The Gang of Four were similar. The guitars command as much as they follow and the vocals are even more digressive. Together, both bands represent an interesting projection out of the old Punk's three-chord frenzy once to narrow medium-tempo excursions. The same compulsive attention to form and its definition (once called "minimalist") prevailed and, if the form is somehow sexier—and erotic subtexts float by in their trance sound—the old refusals make the connection with Punk.

ELVIS COSTELLO

BY FRED SCHRUERS

The four-piece band that Elvis Costello anchors looks simply too small, like something you'd hire for a bargain wedding. The gear is basic, stripped down, so gangly keyboardist Steve Nieve and drummer Bruce Thomas look like their knees are about to tip over instruments looted from a toyshop. There's just one vocal mike, which Elvis, looking jowly and soon to be sweating heavily under his gray groom's coat, straddles protectively throughout the evening. Bathed in basic white spotlights, they look like very small potatoes.

ing. From Costello's first appearance, singing "Just A Memory" sans band on a darkened stage, he avoided making any false moves by scarcely moving at all. He just stood there crooning his guts out. While the show was well larded with big beat rock 'n' roll tunes (e.g., "Radio Radio," introduced with "Things haven't really changed much, have they?") this show was what we saw coming with material on last year's *Get Happy*—a song stylist's *tour de force.*

You wouldn't quite call it pretty singing, but it certainly was finely nuanced, melodic, even studious. Never, however, lacking in passion. During certain quieter numbers, like *Trust*'s "New Lace Sleeves" or the obligatory "Alison," Costello keeps himself gathered like a cat padding softly into snatching-range of a bird. When the fevered moment comes—*Sometimes I wish I could stop you from talking . . .*—it's generally reinforced by a brutal rim shot and an almost involuntary seizing gesture with his left hand.

The Rumour's Martin Belmont came on to play guitar midway through the set, but the real standout was bassist Pete Thomas, whose fills were sometimes throaty and percussive, sometimes neatly executed chirps and skids, but always an intelligent augmentation of the mood the song set.

A week after his Palladium gig, at the Capitol Theater in New Jersey, Costello would spice the set with Irma Thomas' "I Need Your Love So Bad" and the Temptations' "Don't Look Back"; in New York, the most interesting nugget was Patsy Cline's "She's Got You"—hardly a better country tune than Costello's own likeably formulaic "Different Finger." The winding, hesitating melody line of "She's Got You" is so similar to that of "You Don't Know Me" that Costello's phrasing sounded for all the world like the man whose name he so notoriously took in vain, Ray Charles.

It seems that we now have an Elvis Costello who wants to perfect his art, not his attitude. He even grinned twice when Squeeze's Glen Tilbrook, fresh from a hot opening set and bouncing around like a spaniel, joined him for a rousing version of "From A Whisper To A Scream." In one final display of musical brotherhood, Costello vamped into Stevie Wonder's "Master Blaster" in the middle of "Watching the Detectives," ending a slam-bang hour of song in the same peak form he'd begun in. And Costello in peak form is quite satisfying indeed.

THE B-52'S

BY ED NAHA

Reviewing a B-52's concert is no easy task. It's like critiqueing a party. Visually, they are the equivalent of one of those vintage *52 Greatest Dance Hits For $1.98* album covers come to life. Singer/dancer Cindy Wilson, bouffant hair piled to skyscraper level, does the frug, the monkey and the shimmy with wild abandon, wearing a black a go go slacks outfit (circa '64) with white fringes. Her kind of exaggerated surrealism is the type of behavior that would garner her instant acceptance in a New Jersey bowling alley.

Casually clad crooner Fred Schneider is no slouch in the happy feet department either, occasionally lapsing into an across-the-stage version of the pony. Multi-faceted Kate Pierson, although forced to remain behind the keyboards, provides a viable energy source herself—teased hair bobbing with each bump and grind of her red mini frock (matching purse languishing nearby, fashion fans).

Musically, the B-52's are as aberrant as their appearance, a cross between California surf strains, *Science Fiction Theatre* and shock therapy treatments. Verbally, they are suitably campy. Before this rabid crowd, they gleefully mix handfuls of 1979 oldies with tunes from *Wild Planet*. The cumulative effect is deftly daft. Drummer Keith Strickland churns out appropriately slapdash patterns while guitarist Ricky Wilson provides a cornucopia of strange noises, ranging from the Duane Eddy meets *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* tone on "Rock Lobster" to the fat sound used to beef up "Quiche Lorraine." The bass lines are usually provided by convulsive Kate at the keyboards.

Rhythmically spasmodic and lyrically twisted (one song, "The Devil In My Car," features the memorable summation: *I don't want a car that's the Devil!* At least it's not a Pinto, Fred), the B-52's have proven themselves more than the mere fad a lot of critics pegged them for. While these Beach Blanket bozos cut capers on stage, their audience, encompassing every type of rock fan in existence, gets lost in the music: dancing, smiling, cheering.

Once more, everyone knows the lyrics, too! Ever hear 6,000 people sing *Why don't you dance with me? I'm not no limburger!* in unison? If you really want something to think about, try envisioning the same size crowd shrieking and gurgling all the sound effects to "Rock Lobster."

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At the end of an hour of this insanity, the B-52's disappeared from view and the inmates filed out of the amphitheatre to take their places in the real world. Frankly, I don't think the real world stands a chance. For that fact alone, the B-52's should be profusely thanked. In a world wherein sanity is considered a mummified matinee idol for president and the terrorist-of-the-week-club blowing up a building or two, the concept of thousands of individuals grinning to visions of rock lobsters, bikini whales and girls from Planet Claire is somehow reassuring.

Crazy? Certainly not. I'd thank the B-52's personally but they don't let me roam around much here. I can't write them because they've taken most of my sharp things away. And crayons are such a drag. Nurse. Nurse! Why don't you pay attention to me? I'm not no limburger!

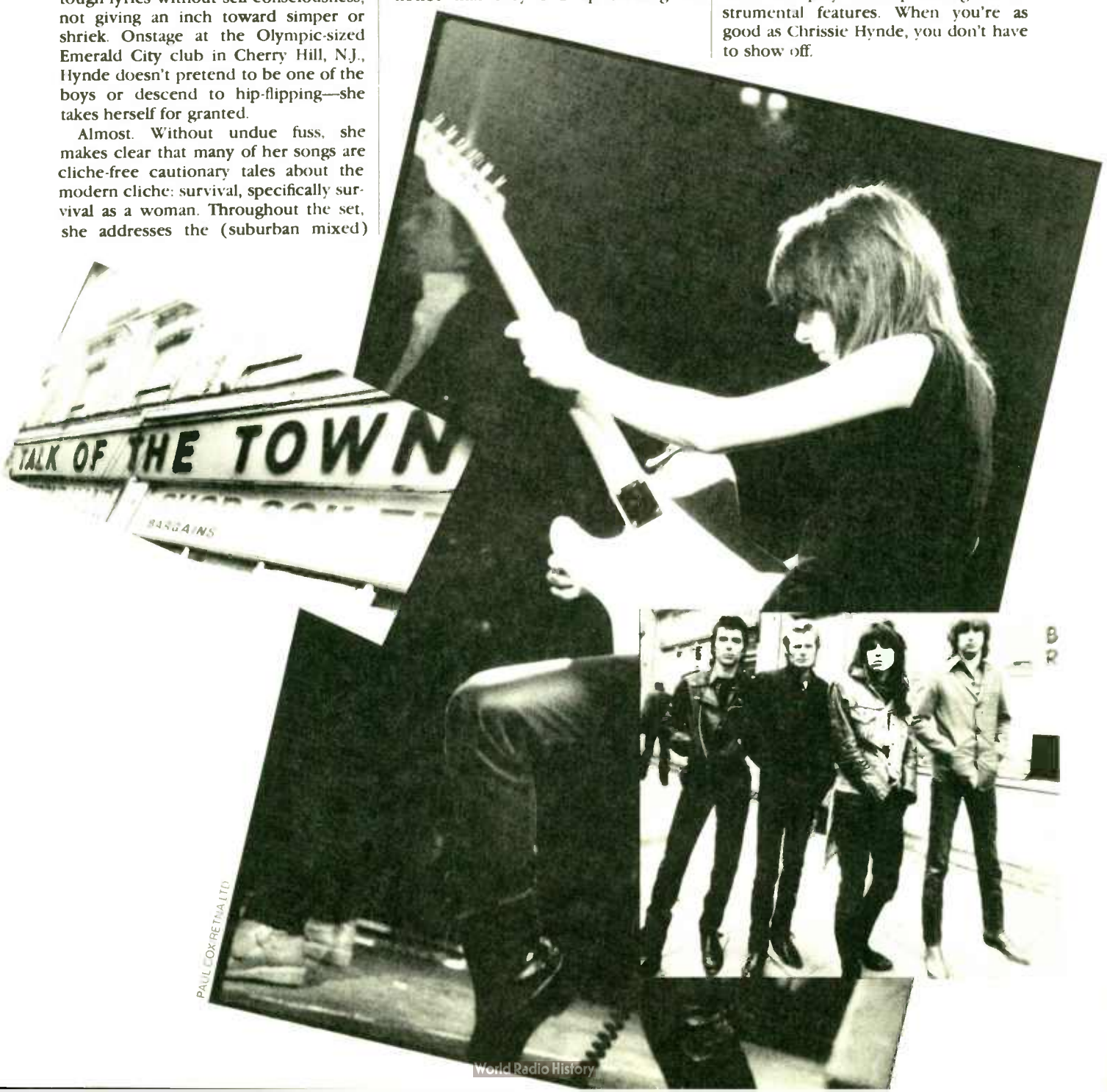
THE PRETENDERS

BY JON PARELES

Chrissie Hynde's got nothing to prove. Her band, the Pretenders, had a debut LP in the top ten, and it's doubtless the only recent album that high on the charts to boast such odd meters as 27/4 ("The Phone Call") or 15/4("Tattooed Love Boys"). Hynde is the brains behind those beats; she's also a sultry voice in front of them, singing tough lyrics without self-consciousness, not giving an inch toward simper or shriek. Onstage at the Olympic-sized Emerald City club in Cherry Hill, N.J., Hynde doesn't pretend to be one of the boys or descend to hip-flipping—she takes herself for granted.

Almost. Without undue fuss, she makes clear that many of her songs are cliche-free cautionary tales about the modern cliche: survival, specifically survival as a woman. Throughout the set, she addresses the (suburban mixed) crowd as "girls"; she dedicates "Brass in Pocket" not to the singles-bar clientele it seems to be aimed at, but to anyone who's worked as a waitress. Before the band plays "Tattooed Love Boys," she asks if there are any bikers in the audience, hears a few shouts, then explains that the song isn't for bikers, but for any girl who's been beaten up by the same man more than once.

The band negotiates the time changes in grand style, so well the crowd doesn't notice that they end up dancing on offbeats. Drummer Martin Chambers has found a post-disco rock approach; reversing rock conventions, the bass drum hits every beat (a la disco) while the rest of the kit is used only for accents. Hynde's voice isn't always on pitch (the fault of the monitors?), but her phrasing and the cool assurance of her presence make up for inaccuracies. In fact, Hynde is so interesting to watch that she upstages guitarist James Honeyman Scott—a teen idol in England—even when she plays backup during his instrumental features. When you're as good as Chrissie Hynde, you don't have to show off.



THE SPECIALS

BY ROY TRAKIN

PAUL COX/RETNA

These seven latter-day rude boys, sporting shaved heads, short-brimmed "pork-pie" hats and flatheeled, crepe-soled wingtips, have latched onto one of the most irresistible dance beats in music. Known in various forms as ska, bluebeat or rock steady, this skiffling, skanking Jamaican rhythm effortlessly grafts New Orleans swing onto a pre-reggae R&B based form of West Indian calypso, with the important addition of horns. From the heart of working class England in Coventry, the bi-racial Specials have injected ska with the dynamic urgency of three-chord punk it needed to turn the teens of the world (as well as the adults) into a mass of undulating bodies.

Keyboardist Jerry Dammers founded the Specials, wrote all their original material (the band performs a bunch of well-researched *and* accredited covers) and organized the record company, 2-Tone, that disseminates their music. Along with the Specials, 2-Tone includes modern English variants on ska/bluebeat/reggae like Selecter, Beat, Madness and Body Snatchers, an all-girl ska band. The fledgling label has proven to be an amazing success in England, dominating both the singles and album charts there for months, and America looks ready to fall in line. During their current cross-country tour, the Specials are reportedly sending audiences into dancing frenzies at locales as far afield as Oklahoma City, where few people have ever heard of a pork-pie hat, let alone the legendary ska trombonist who performs with the Specials, Rico Rodriguez.

In concert, the Specials leap and sway into beatific abandon, a united front dedicated to obliterate the inequities of the world with an infectiously care-free island shuffle fused to a rock 'n' roll beat. The songs, sung by Terry Hall in a voice that cavorts easily between Rasta dub and Cockney punk, range in social significance from the rallying cries of "Doesn't Make It Alright," "It's Up To You," "A Message To You, Rudy" and "(Dawning Of A) New Era" to the utter abandon of "Nite Klub," "Do The Dog" and "Too Hot." Back-up vocalist and non-stop mover Neville Staples provides some dizzying steps while ex-punk guitarist Roddy "Radiation" Byers reels off wickedly metallic leads in the midst of an otherwise gently swaying rock steady. Black rhythm guitarist Lynval Golding provides the syncopated skank and "Sir Horace Gentleman's" bass is as sinewy as it is booming. Drummer John Bradbury holds the whole enterprise glued together with some well-timed whacks on the rim, more than earning his title, "Prince Rimshot," while toothlessly grinning Dammers' roller rink organ propels the tunes breathlessly along. Despite their unabashed dip into the past for their inspiration, and their rather too closely aped rude-boy attire, the Specials have harnessed these two clashing energies and turned the result into a remarkable product, at once unique and immediately accessible. A look to the future rather than the past.

ANDY FREEBERG/RETNA LTD.

X

BY DON SNOWDEN

There's been precious little in the albums released by new Los Angeles bands to counter the widespread notion that LA merely swallows up prevailing trends and spits back pallid, plastic imitations of them. *Los Angeles*, the debut album on the independent, Jem-distributed Slash label, is the first vinyl indication that there's some fresh, vital music stirring in the City of Angels.

X has taken the kinetic, three chord power of punk as its base and welded choppy riffs, unorthodox melody lines and eerie vocal harmonies to that framework. Bassist John Doe and Exene supply the songs and voices to complement their street-life vignettes of a Los Angeles that's far from mellow.

Doe is an excellent singer, his expressive voice often tailing off into a melismatic howl at the end of a line; Exene's forte is the character of her singing, so evident in the band's live performances, but it doesn't make the transition to vinyl as well. They met at the Venice Poetry Workshop and, while the lyrics never slide into the realm of sung poetry, images like "The World's A Mess: It's In My Kiss" should offer enough for those prone to symbolic analysis.

Guitarist Bill Zoom (who led his own rockabilly band and played with the late Gene Vincent years ago) smoothly integrates rockabilly and classic Berry links into punk power chords. Drummer Don Bonebrake maintains a relentless pace, heavy on the bassdrum and snare shots, frequently throwing in the rockabilly two step for an extra push.

In his first outside production venture, Ray Manzarek has opted for a no frills, minimal overdubbing approach that attains a clean, crisp studio sound without sacrificing the band's live power. *Los Angeles* is quite simply a great album, one that I suspect even surprised X's local followers.

So why is a band capable of making this good a record not signed to a major label? When London and New York went through the initial throes of the punk paroxysm, the trailblazer bands, the ones who founded and shaped the scenes, ended up (however grudgingly or belatedly) with contracts.

That didn't happen in Los Angeles—the local punk bands suffered through an 18 month de facto booking ban at the major Hollywood clubs, at that time (spring '78) virtually the only venues open to live original music. The power pop bands and career-hungry trend jumpers reaped the rewards of being in the industry eye when the music business here realized that something was happening on the local front. Hence all those wonderfully worthless albums by Sue Saad, Shandi, Sumner, et al.

The ban had two salutary effects—the punk bands were forced to go out and found the now-thriving network of clubs where they could play and build their audience from the ground floor up. X's grassroots following is so strong now that *Los Angeles* edged into the lower reaches of the trade charts for a few weeks *solely* on the basis of local sales.

LAURA LEVINE

ANN SUMMA

Exene and John Doe

LAURA LEVINE

BY AARON FUCHS

1981 saw rhythm and blues go in two dramatically different, almost polar, directions; one shaped by the demands of radio—the other by the needs of the street and tellingly, each found a constituency in the marketplace. On the one extreme, the kind of r&b that was able to crossover to the pop (read white) market had to toe the same mellow, devitalized line as pop and rock music to be tolerated by the airwaves, if and when it could cross over at all. Mellow (the operative word) show-biz type black artists like Stephanie Mills and Teddy Pendergrass, as well as Diana Ross and Lionel Ritchie and the Commodores (how odd that both pairs should record as duets) remained virtually the only artists that received pop radio play with any consistency (by contrast, the last three successive number one r&b records have failed to dent the *Billboard*'s pop top 30).

In terms of touring, another lower, if gutsier, common denominator was adhered to; that of the self-contained funk band. With stand-up singers and funk fusion running a decided second, self-contained funkers such as Kool and the Gang, Cameo, Slave, the Gap Band, Con-Funk-Shun, and the rest acquitted themselves as near-parallels to heavy metal rockers with their ability to tour successfully and sell records with less of a dependence on radio play than other kinds of artists. By contrast to the funkers' national popularity, more traditional stand-up singers found their work-territory confined to the deep south.

Perhaps the most significant development in r&b however defied the traditional wisdom that records be marketed nationally. In a development that ultimately had the majors rethinking their marketing philosophies, 1980 saw the Northeastern U.S. explode with an outburst of independent label activity. After the majors had declared disco dead, the independent entrepreneurs that had nurtured the idiom to begin with, tightened their belts, consolidated their gains, then proceeded to come back magnificently as their disco sales base mushroomed to include r&b, rap, and rock, culminating in the rise of the far less stigmatic term "dance music." These entrepreneurs proved that by concentrating on a regional base—in this case the Northeast (which even rock mavens had begun to regard as "the last leg of a European tour") they could take advantage of the fertile local club scene as a vehicle for breaking records, and, finally, limit themselves to sales of twelve inch singles, in order to endure and prosper. By the year's end, many majors, particularly those with an East Coast base, had begun to adopt these practices.

It should also be said in closing, that rap music, which by no means started in '80, received its greatest pop recognition. Buoyed by the pop success of Blondie's rap record, "Rapture," the rap idiom, which had previously been confined to uptown ghetto sales in New York, began to filter increasingly into the r&b (Quincy Jones, the Solar axis) then pop (the Clash, Evasion), media

SOUL REVIVAL

BY DAVE MARSH

The best way of discovering what music a person truly cherishes, I've always thought, is to turn them loose between midnight and dawn. In the daylight, you can tolerate almost anything, and after dinner, a certain conviviality is a necessity. But in the midnight hours, when the lights go down and the air is hazy, the treasures come out. One turns in those moments to what is most sustaining, if only as a hedge against heading for bed.

For me that has always meant soul music of the most bleak sort. I'm liable to put on *The Miracles From the Beginning* at almost any time, but when it gets late enough for the liggers to head home, when only the hard core is hanging in alone, nothing satisfies quite like James Carr purring "Pouring Water On a Drowning Man," or Clarence Carter's hilarious and hair-raising "Making Love (At the Dark End of the Street)," or the great Sam Cooke ballads, or Bobby Bland's forlorn splendor on "Lead Me On." Lately, the number has been an obscure song from Otis Redding's *Soul Ballads* album called "Cigarettes and Coffee."

"Cigarettes and Coffee" is set in the midnight hours. *It's early in the morning, about a quarter till three,* Otis sings, as the guitar of Steve Cropper plays off the swelling Barkays horns. This is Redding inside out, at least as far as most know him. He is not despairing or pleading but speaking as plainly as possible, not preaching but confessing, not raging against infidelity or dissatisfaction but celebrating a profound contentment. (The lyric develops into a marriage proposal.) All the while, Al Jackson keeps time with stately accents, popping the one and virtually smothering all the other beats. And in the end, Redding's vulnerability is so great that it makes you accept your own a little bit better.

No one makes records like that anymore, maybe because the world has changed just enough to make such peace of mind even less imaginable than it was when Otis first recorded the song, fifteen years ago. For a long time, anyone who still held on to such music seemed anachronistic or felt very, very lonely. But in the last few months, soul music has begun to reblossom; Wilson Pickett, James Brown, Solomon Burke, Sam and Dave, Rufus Thomas, Jr. Walker and the All Stars, Percy Sledge, Carla Thomas, Martha Reeves and Clarence Carter have all made appearances at New York clubs, from the tiny ones to the huge Ritz Ballroom, from reasonably likely venues such as the Peppermint Lounge to the anomalous country bar, the Lone Star Cafe.

In Japan and England, there are already substantial soul revivals, spearheaded by an exquisite reissue program in Japan, and in the UK, by a number of good, solid soul-style bands, notably Dexy's Midnight Runners, Nine Below Zero and Paul Jones's The Blues Band. Already, Solid Smoke, the San Francisco revivalist label, has released an album of Fifties and Sixties tracks by the obscure but marvelous Sheppards, a Chicago harmony quartet; reissued James Brown's masterpiece, *Live and Lowdown at the Apollo, Vol. 1*; and reportedly, has plans afoot to put out some new sides by a revived version of the Falcons, the venerable Detroit group, whose reincarnation includes original members Eddie Floyd, Mack Rice (author of "Mustang Sally") and Joe Stubbs (brother of the Four Tops' Levi), and possibly including guest appearances by erstwhile Falcons Pickett and Johnny Taylor.

I've only seen a couple of the soul shows that have hit New York, one by Pickett at the Lone Star, and another at the much larger Ritz, which featured Carla Thomas, Clarence Carter, and Sledge. The show at the Ritz was poorly attended, although the four or five hundred patrons might well have been only a hundred or so fewer than those who packed Pickett's two sets. Thomas turned in a rather pedestrian set, which came to life only at the very end, when she soared into her original hit, "Gee Whiz." Sledge, the headliner, had disastrous problems with his band, and retired after singing only one full song, but that was a heartfelt version of "My Special Prayer" which revealed that he remains in full command of his spectacularly huge and orchestrally mellow voice. Carter, who was second-billed, stole the show like the rapscallion he is, cutting through the bulk of his hits, tossing off some casually terrific guitar solos and singing with professionalism, if not nearly so much passion as he conveys on his best records. Carter is blind, and perhaps it helps that he did not have to confront visually the vast empty spaces of the hall—indeed, his whole-hearted enthusiasm for this crowd, sparse as it was, struck me as a model of soul artifice, that special capacity for bringing emotional conviction to the most specious material that is soul's special glory.

Wilson Pickett was another story, but then, he always has been. Pickett never owned much subtlety, but he's learned more than a few tricks over the years, and despite the fact that he is nearly a decade between hits at the moment, the Lone Star performance convinced me that he is a surer, more intelligent singer than he was during his commercial heyday. Backed by a powerhouse band, which rocked mercilessly and set up a devilish groove, Pickett matched his best recorded moments lick for lick, opening with "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You" and running through his most familiar hits, including "In the Midnight Hour" and "Mustang Sally" and about eight bars of "Ninety-Nine and A Half (Just Won't Do)." Pickett was all sweat and leather, Stagger Lee incarnate, and although the audience was curiously apathetic—or maybe intimidated—he didn't hold anything back. In fact, the lukewarm response he received seemed to spur him on, and he pulled out "Hey Jude" for the final song of the set.

I've never liked Pickett's recording of that Beatles' chestnut because it served as a showcase for the worst excesses of both guitarist Duane Allman and himself. But on this night, the song was simply unmatchable, hard, stinging lick after lick, body punches that finally loosened up the crowd enough to share some of Wilson's frenzied energy. In those moments, chanting "Hey Jude" over and over, Pickett not only beat his own version of the song, he actually topped the Beatles' original, too. For that night, at least, he *owned* all of his material, and it was hard to believe that anyone anywhere was singing any better.

Pickett's show was a minor revelation, and a lesson to anyone who takes seriously the idea that youth has anything to do with musical intensity. He must be past 40 by now, and it was hard to believe that he'd ever been more ferocious on any stage.

I thought at first that this ferocity explained the temerity of the audience. At his best, Pickett is a show business version of the urban black man most whites (and whites were 90 percent of the crowd) have been brought up to fear above all things. His perfect white counterpart is Jerry Lee Lewis, who represents to Northerners the incarnation of all that's most fearsome about the redneck South.

Yet Pickett was downright cordial (for Pickett) that night, at least until he became frustrated with the lack of feedback. Maybe, I thought later, such au-

diences have simply forgotten, if they ever knew, what it means to respond to such audience/performer give and take. What Pickett wanted was something more than the idle bottom shaking and random huzzahs of a rock band's show; he wanted participation in the spirit of the moment, and he wanted collective testimony to the power and presence of that spirit.

But then, clearly that audience was not particularly interested in saluting the spirit. At first I couldn't figure this out. Any experience of Pickett's show was colored by the fact that, for me, soul really didn't need to be revived, having never strayed very far from my turntable anyway. For most of the soul revival crowd, this music isn't an emotional necessity—it's only a convenience. Like most revivals, the soul resurgence is more concerned with form than feeling. It is not insignificant that of all the performers I saw, only Clarence Carter offered any new, unfamiliar material (and that was a song, recorded as a 45, that could have been an outtake from any of his earlier sessions). And I suspect that most of the audience would have been terribly uncomfortable if they had been presented with anything unpredictable. Nor is the constituency of those crowds ignorable; they were loaded with just those people who are most alienated from contemporary black pop idioms. That is, the sort of music fan who believes that disco sucks, and has never been comfortable with post-Sly funk.

For just such reasons, pop music revivals are always untrustworthy. The revivalist cults invariably look for a reiteration of the old-fashioned moves without much regard for the old-fashioned motivation. Usually, this has a lot to do with looking for an excuse not to deal with discomfiting changes in contemporary style. Perhaps white hipsters are perennially destined to be wrapped up in black forms one or two convolutions behind black pop taste, to forever be reviving country blues just as Motown and Stax are hitting their stride, or reviving soul music just as Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers and Junie Morrison are making dance rhythms and post-psychedelic funk fascinating once more. Unless the soul revival can create a universe, where Otis Redding can co-exist with Junie Morrison, it represents a failure of nerve and an insult to the genuine artistry of both men. If Redding, by far the greatest soul singer of our times, was around today, I guarantee you he wouldn't be singing "Try a Little Tenderness" except in a medley used to deepen the meaning of his contemporary work. I'd also be willing to bet most of the soul revival fans wouldn't have stayed with him this long in any event. Ask Marvin Gaye. I don't mean that I would rather listen to the new Philippe Wynne album than to "634-5789" or that a lot of what's going on in the funk avant-garde doesn't strike me as the recycling of many of the worst tendencies of recent white rock. But somehow it seems valuable to struggle with what I don't like about those styles. After all, just dredging up the past won't do. What the Ritz audience couldn't understand was that when Wilson Pickett sang "Hey, Jude" that night, it was the only song in his set that *wasn't* part of the soul revival.

RAPPERS CONVENTION

BY JON PARELES

LAURA LEVINE

Grand Master Flash

Rap has arrived, and this show was going to prove it. The 369th Armory, at 142nd Street in Harlem, holds maybe 15,000 people, and it looked more than half full for a bill with all the rap acts on Sugar Hill Records—the Sugar Hill Gang, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, the Funky Four Plus One, Sequence, Spoonie Gee—and various DJs and rival-label acts, many billed as "invited guests" (which apparently meant that they had been sent invitations, nothing more). ABC's *20/20* had sent a crew; the music press had been notified. Another New York phenom was making its bid to go national.

But will it? I'm not so sure. Rapping, or jive-talking over instrumental tracks (often from established hits), rarely works the way pop lyrics do. Most rapping, particularly group rapping, works like drum solos: connoisseurs dig the syncopation and the surprises. Since rappers often use pre-recorded tracks from records, it's difficult to build any drama or tension, although the newest bunch of rappers are becoming turntable virtuosi. And, of course, some rappers hedge their bets by trying to sing, a move that's invariably disastrous.

I arrived after the Mean Machine had rapped in English and Spanish. By the time I'd adjusted to the Armory's echoes, Wayne and Charlie the Rappin' Dummy were taking their bows. After a while the Treacherous Three came on, rap-singing their own lyrics to "I Want You Back" while their DJ spun the Jackson 5's instrumental intro over and over. The Three did all the standard rap shtick—boasting about themselves, introducing each other again and again, invoking the "party" spirit—plus choreography and forced smiles. Unfortunately, they didn't have any script to cover technical difficulties. Except for a triple-time, paradiddling break that roused the crowd, the response was indifferent until the Three did their hit, "Feel the Heartbeat."

The Funky Four Plus One's set was tighter—no technical difficulties, more confident choreography, more interesting vocal syncopations. It helped that they had a center of attention: the flounce-dressed but no-nonsense Plus One, Ms. Sharrock, who calmly turned her back on the audience between breaks. What the Four Plus One had to say was basically the same as the Three, but they had more panache. And their "That's the Joint" was not only the drug of choice, but the slogan of the year.

I should've guessed Sequence was faking it when the crew started setting up a live band. Sequence, three pudgy women in (yes) cheerleader outfits, turned out to be a girl group—singing group—trying to latch onto a current trend; they rapped a little and, unfortunately, sang a lot. After the lickety-split rapping, their soul ballads seemed almost glacially slow, and their flat high notes would have been grueling in any case.

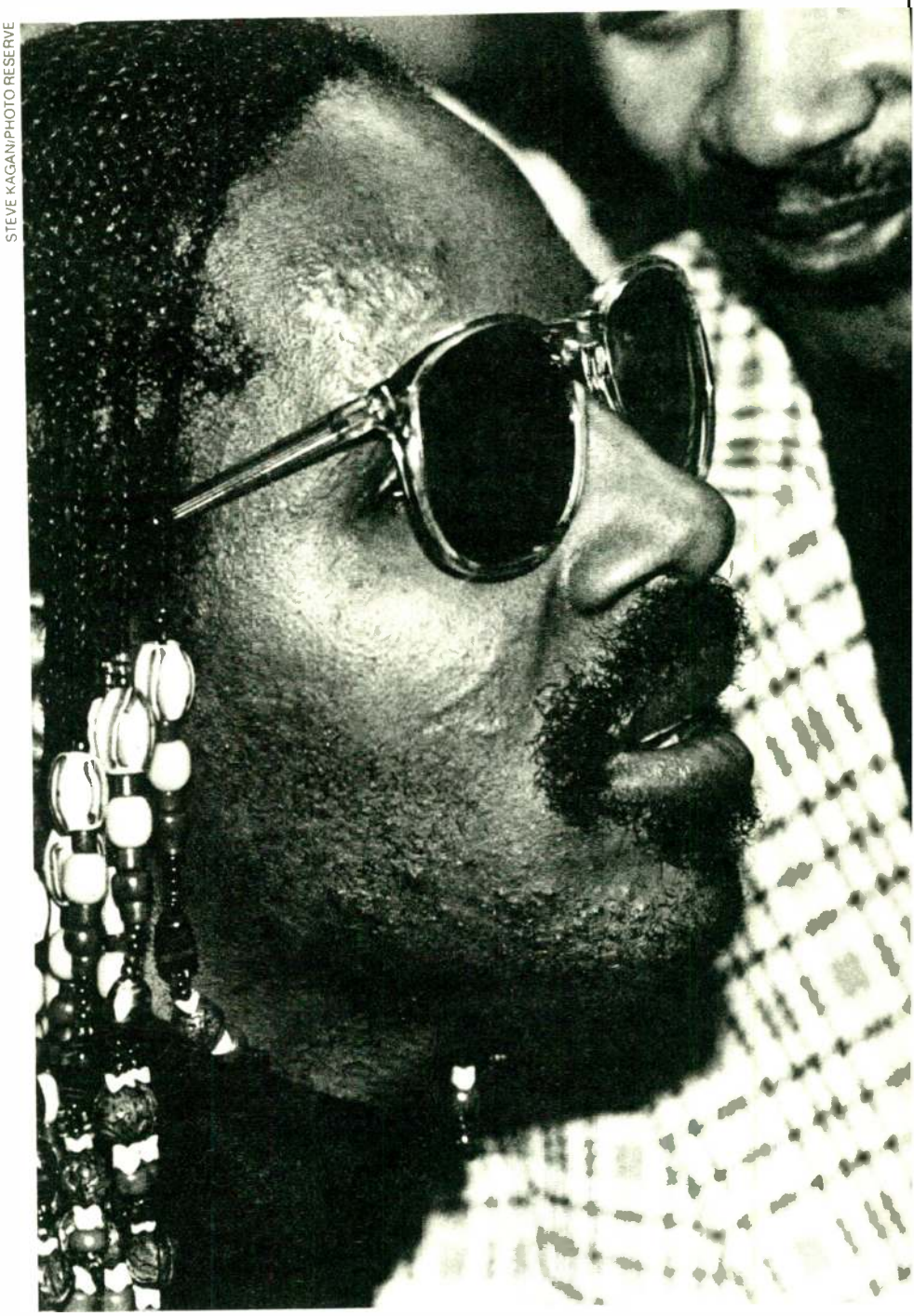
But Sequence never got to finish their set. All of a sudden, people in the front of the Armory started running for the back; within a few seconds, up to a quarter of the crowd was gone. Sequence left the stage, and the houselights came on as a few people filtered back in. Suddenly, more people began to run for the back. When the third wave headed for the exits, I was in it. Reportedly, someone had been waving around a gun.

Sharrock of Funky Four + 1

LAURA LEVINE

STEVE WONDER

BY DAVID BRESKIN



STEVE KAGAN/PHOTO RESERVE

Back from his trek through the furtive doings of flora, Stevie Wonder came to New York to give one concert at—of all paradoxial places—the Garden. In anticipation of "The Hotter than July Summer Picnic" (as the concert was labelled), Madison Square sold out so quickly that a second date was added. We attended the latter, and by all indications—word of mouth and print, sneaking suspicions, and the deeply muted enthusiasm of the crowd as it left our show—the first gig was probably superior. That one may have been hotter than July, ours was more like May.

Not that anything ran amuck. Wonder and the unfortunately titled "Wonderlove," his 13-piece band heavy on the punchy horns and cooing chix, clicked off his 26 or 27 greatest hits with such rapidity and ease one wonders whether Stevie could do it all in his sleep by now. The medley was far from being a soporific, but the problem is: we've heard all his terrific tunes so many times by now—every bar mitzvah reception, debutante hall, and wedding party in the last five years has featured a Bill Murray styled Wonder medley—that unless the performance features radically different arrangements, Springsteenian energy, or at least a few flouncing solos (and this one had none of them) it becomes a little more than an audio-visual aid to your radio memories. A live regurgitation session dominated by old material, even with the benefit of binoculars or weed, is still nothing to stand up and shout about. Appropriately, the audience stayed glued to its cushy seats for all but Wonder's two most recent kickers, "Let's Get Serious" and the concert-ending "Master Blaster."

On the first, Wonder produced a full-color print of Jermaine Jackson's black-and-white negative, raking his voice over the hook in dramatic fashion, and on the second—only one of two offerings from the new record—he brought out Gil Scott-Heron (who opened the show) and Michael Jackson, who bopped out boldly and nipped all over the stage in designer jeans, silver jacket, and mirror shades. The smiling gyrations of this littlest Jackson, who must still be looking for Zimbabwe on the map, was the highlight of the night for a good many jeune fille in attendance.

Me, I thought the evening's apogee occurred when Wonderlove split and left Stevie to Fender Rhodes for himself. His lectures on love and his kibbitzing with the crowd ("Let me take off my glasses and get a look at y'all" ha-ha) I can do without, but his improvisational, almost free-form sculpting of ballads, such as "All Is Fair In Love", made the set's quietest moments its most powerful. When he gave himself room to truly *play* with his songs—the emotions as well as the chords—laughing ironically through one phrase, countering with a choked sob on the next, gliding from his sandpaper shout into Hartmanesque ribbons of velvet, Wonder cut through not only the oppressive capaciousness of the Garden, but also the slick wrapping on the rest of the evening's pop package.

WILD TCHOUPITOULAS

BY MICHAEL SHORE

Is it any wonder that New Orleans musicians rarely play outside their hometown? There's the food, the music, the alcohol, the heat, the funerals, Jax, Walgreen's, Mardi Gras, the stuff of American legend—who needs to leave just to impress big city dwellers and unsuspecting heartlanders up north?

Undoubtedly it was this, as well as superstitious jitters, that prevented the great R&B singer Earl "Trick Bag" King from boarding his plane for a Friday the 13th (of June) gig at The 80s in New York. Thankfully, a concurrently advertised show with the Neville Brothers and the wild Tchoupitoulas at the Bottom Line *did* come off, even though the Nevilles themselves had to act as a facsimile of the Tchoups, who were apparently too old and/or settled in their ways to make the trip up. The Tchoupitoulas—once a street gang, hence the war-cry chants like "Meet de boys at de battlefront," "Indians here dey come," and the identification of members of the troupe as Big Chief Jolly, Flag Boy and Spy Boy—are a sort of social club/Mardi Gras tribal society who hang out on Tchoupitoula Street near Tiptina's, work on the stunningly embroidered, plumed, Indian-style Mardi Gras costumes and chant their calls and responses with the Neville

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Brothers backing them. They made an album with the Meters in 1976 (on Island—get it for funk's sake) that became an instant classic, American roots at its best.

The Nevilles do what the Meters did in the 70s, ably preserve the New Orleans tradition of second-line funk, building layer upon layer of deep-in-the-pocket syncopation guaranteed to get your ear in gear, y'hear? The way the offbeats swing through the groove evokes ska and reggae, which of course partly originated in the Crescent City R&B that floated out to island radios. The Nevilles this night weren't quite as good as the Meters in their heyday (but then I've never heard anybody match that syncopated, bonecrushing beat). They opened a set of razor-sharp funk with a neat Booker T-on-the-bayou instrumental, spotlighting Ivan Neville's juicy organ lines, and faltered only in playing too many sweet-soul ballads (but I can't complain too much when one of them was Aaron Neville's 60s classic "Tell It Like It Is"). The Nevilles really got going when they lit into the chunky Meters tune "Fire on the Bayou," which segued right into Professor Longhair's rollicking version of "Big Chief." By this time the capacity crowd was on its feet, stomping and shouting. The Nevilles disappeared while the band pounded out a body-punching Bo Diddley beat until Charles, Cyrille, Ivan Neville and his songwriting chum Reggie Cummings strutted back out all duded up in wild Tchoupitoulas festival garb. There were bright primary colors, feathers and glitters everywhere. The surrogate Tchoupitoulas passed a ceremonial pipe around and commenced a 20-minute set of those fantastically funky, festive, and ferocious call-and-response street anthems over kick-ass rhythm. The insistent, infectious polyrhythms, the secular gospel of the tribal rallying cries, the vivid visual spectacle—it mattered not a whit that Big Chief Jolly (George Landry), whose coarse, weathered bray of a voice is one of the Tchoup LP's most endearing charms, wasn't up there. The music took on a life of its own, a power enhanced to earthshaking proportions by the celebratory rite in which we all partook. But then (like Sun Ra) a wild Tchoupitoulas show is more than mere music: it's a striking, peculiarly American hybrid of music, dance, theatre and cross-cultural ritual that resolves itself in an overwhelming universal funk catharsis. We jaded big city dwellers could stand a little more of this medicine.

PAUL NATKIN-PHOTO RESERVE

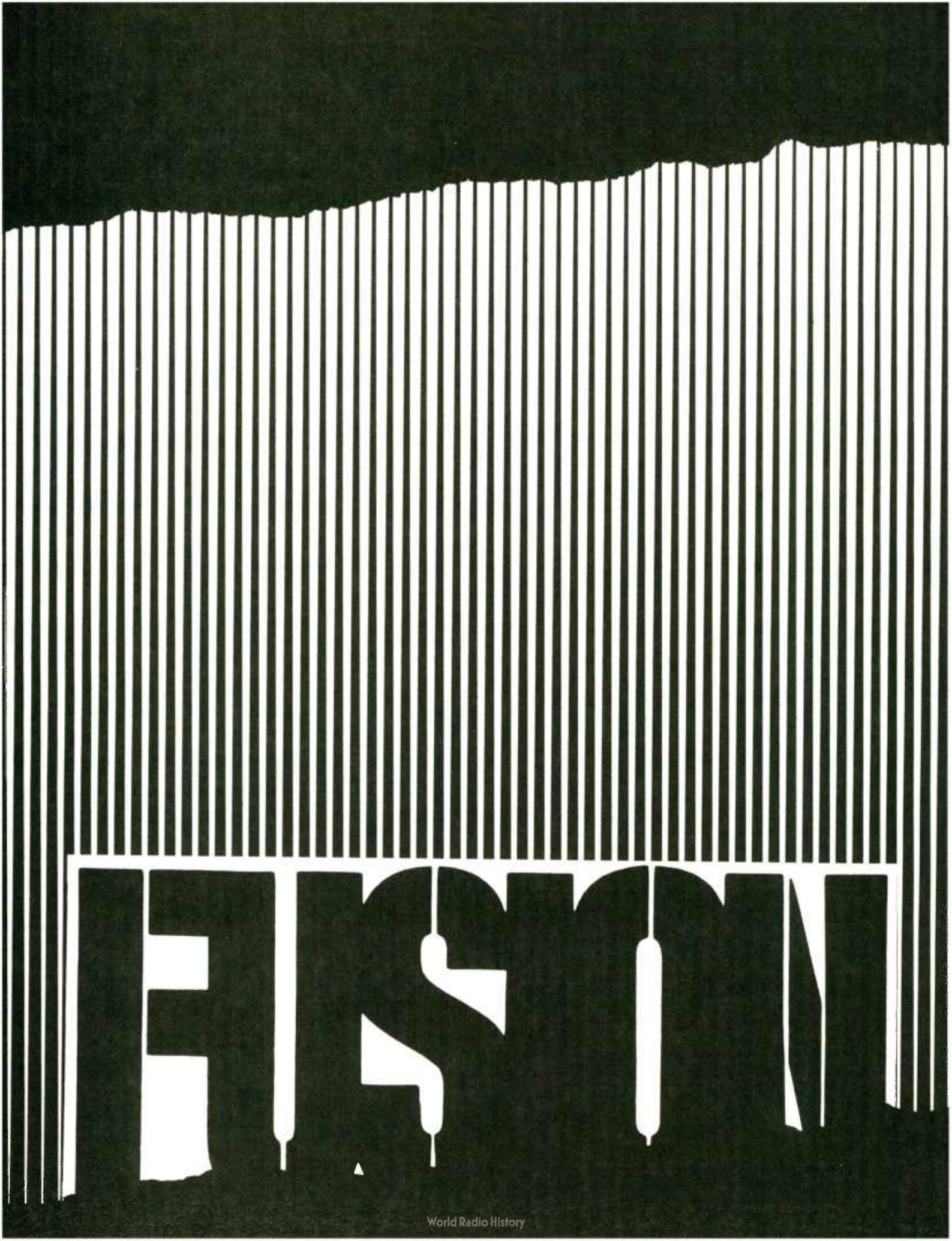
It's hard to imagine that a Smokey Robinson concert could hold much in the way of surprises. Celebrating his 25th year in the business, Robinson possesses one of the most easily-recognizable voices in pop music. Nor should we forget the reason that voice is so familiar: Robinson's considerable gifts as a songwriter, which has produced such memorable songs as "What's So Good About Goodbye," "Tracks of My Tears," "Ooo Baby Baby," "Tears of a Clown" and "Cruising." Not to mention "Being With You," Robinson's latest and arguably best single in ten years.

With a backlog of material as impressive as Robinson's, you'd expect the show to be parcelled into sections of "new material" and "old material." Which is exactly what Robinson did when he came to Baltimore's Painters Mill Star Theater. After letting his backup singers do two numbers—a nice gesture that would have made more sense had those songs been something other than covers of "Make That Move" and "What Cha Gonna Do For Me"—Robinson got things rolling with a quick run through of his new album, *Being With You*, along with other post-Miracles material like "Cruising" and "A Quiet Storm."

The only detour was into "More Love," which Robinson called, "a new old song." He credited the revitalization of the Miracles hit to Kim Carnes, whose version of the song he had heard on the radio one day. In fact, Robinson said, he was so impressed by Carnes' rendition that he decided to write some new songs for her. "See, I'm always thinking," he confided to the audience. "I figure if somebody likes one of my songs, they might want to record some more." So Robinson took a couple songs over to George Tobin, who had produced Carnes' version of "More Love." One of those happened to be, in Tobin's opinion, better suited to Robinson's voice than Carnes'. It was called "Being With You."

That was the first surprise.

The second surprise came during the oldies section of the show. Robinson did this segment on a request basis, a tactic greatly facilitated by Painters Mill's theater-in-the-round format. While the musical surprises were few, what was amazing was the unaffected sense of giving on Robinson's part. Not only did he rejoice at some of the more obscure requests, like a version of "Bad Girl" that had him covering all four parts in the doo wop arrangement, but he graciously played the part of "the star" as an assortment of women from the audience rushed the stage to kiss or touch him. At one point, Robinson was nearly knocked off his feet by the eager fans, and yet, in a situation that would have panicked most other performers into issuing arrogant demands to "clear the stage," Robinson never lost his smile. In fact, he made a point of holding each hand offered him, and seemed to enjoy the contact as much as the fans.



BY JOHN SWENSON

Fusion is the Rodney Dangerfield of musical genres. What seemed a genuine promise of merging rock's accessibility and jazz's musicality in the early '70s has become an emotionally hollow form attacked on the right for being pretentious and on the left for selling out. It *is* generally true that few advances have been made in the genre over the past decade, with Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* and *Jack Johnson*, the Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Birds of Fire*, Chick Corea's *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy* and Larry Coryell's *Eleventh House* pretty much describing the genre's limits. Nevertheless, even though few musicians would feel very comfortable with the fusion tag these days, there are still some stalwarts who've refused to abandon the original good intentions the form harbored and continue to work toward a satisfying combination of jazz and rock.

Fusion got a lot of the blame for the terrible attrition in the 'traditional' post-bop blowing jazz during the '70s. Economics, of course, dictated that players move away from more personal soloing formats in order to earn a living, but few jazz musicians really cashed in on fusion. Disco sessions proved to be where the real money was—Cedar Walton may have made his fusion *Mobius* records but he's back to playing an upright in small clubs while those jazz rock LPs rot away in cut out bins. Meanwhile Chuck Mangione traded in his fusion attempts for a career as disco superstar.

With Corea wimping out on Scientology, Miles Davis in semi-retirement and John McLaughlin and Coryell in acoustic retreat, the only top level fusion was being produced by Jeff Beck and the genre's sly auteurs, Weather Report. But even there Beck was accused by rock fans of deserting his showboat strengths and Weather Report was criticized by musical snobs of pandering to rock audiences. But the final public relations blow to fusion came when Miles Davis himself came out of retirement with a brilliantly smoking session straight out of his *Bitches Brew* bag only to be ridiculed by the press.

So even though *The Man With the Horn* represents a major comeback by Miles Davis, even though Billy Cobham, Beck, Jack Bruce, the Dixie Dregs, Tom Scott, the Brecker Brothers, Pat Metheny, et al. continue to make good records, even though Weather Report maintains its brilliant edge in both challenging music and large audience draw, and even though numerous jazz players borrow from rock and vice-versa, fusion remains a dirty word in general critical circles, ironically linking it with heavy metal, a form distasteful to critics but annoyingly ubiquitous. As Mike Stern, the excellent guitarist in Miles Davis' touring group who was slaughtered with unjustified criticism for sounding too much like a rock player, pointed out, "The critics took one look at me, saw I was playing a Stratocaster and just turned off. You can tell from what they wrote that they weren't even listening to what I was playing. Miles told me 'Don't listen to that shit.' He was kind of surprised that I even bothered with it. He said he doesn't even read reviews. I guess he's had bands that have been cut down all the time, that are controversial. He said they put down everybody, they put down 'Trane, they put down everybody. I guess I shouldn't worry."

WEATHER REPORT

BY JON PARELES

For the touring musician, applause is a potent reward—loud and clear and immediate, impossible to ignore. But it hardly reflects the quality of the music. After years of continuous concert-going, I'm convinced that the main thing applause measures is the volume of the music, especially if the volume increases drastically during the tune.

It takes courage, and a strong sense of musical purpose, to shake off the demands of a large audience. Weather Report, who compete in the rock market despite their jazz chops and credentials, are still coming to grips with just what their fans want. Their recent albums exhibit the band's compositional strengths, presenting their tunes with the clarity and smoothly eccentric "orchestration" (largely Josef Zawinul's keyboard combinations) that have rewarded the band with consistent radio play. Half of Weather Report's brilliance (and we'll get to the other half soon) is that they take structure seriously; one reason they're the only jazz-rock fusion still worth hearing is that they realize rock derives power from its structures as well as its beat. They experiment continually with form, so it makes perfect sense (and wonderful music) to freeze these forms when they record their tunes.

But composition is only half the story. Zawinul, reedman Wayne Shorter, and bassist Jaco Pastorius are improvisers to reckon with, and together they can explode the tunes into jams that seem to invent the compositions as they build. But as Weather Report has gained popularity, the bigger audiences—rock audiences—have less and less use for the improvisational crossfire that makes Weather Report *burn* onstage. Instead, they'd applaud perfunctory versions of classic Weather Report tunes (familiarity and simplicity) and go gaga over Jaco Pastorius' bass-and-echoplex solos (loudness) while ignoring the band's best improvisational tangents. And slowly, Weather Report began to succumb. Although I've never seen them do a bad show, when I listened to their live album, *8:30,* back to back with the *Live in Japan* CBS-Sony import (from which side two of *I Sing the Body Electric* is excerpted), I felt betrayed. This wasn't the band I'd heard blowtorching every song they played—it was a rock band summarizing its greatest hits.

Many of the new tunes, including the ones from the studio side of *8:30,* are staccato connect-the-dots ventures that jump up and down and around the scale—the most difficult kind of melody to play with forward momentum and human phrasing. Shorter and Zawinul simply zinged them off, with Pastorius percolating (still a little busily) underneath them, then raised the tunes aloft and flung them into the air. Many of the tunes built along the lines set out by *Sweetnighter*'s "Boogie Woogie Waltz"—slow, unpredictable accretion of thematic material, seemingly spontaneously generated in the heat of the jam—yet the new tunes are more complex, and they tease by making you wonder just what's the thematic and what's not. And just when the band would seem to be heading for fireworks-and-brimstone climaxes, they'd detour for one more strange, wonderful and

They never settled for one mood per song, but would gear up as if heading into a crescendo, but instead of going for the stomping cliche, they'd spin out for a duo or trio and deflect the full-band momentum into improvisation. Shorter and drummer Peter Erskine played one memorable energy duet, out of reach of straight time or chord changes; even "8:30," a fairly typical Zawinul pan-Third-World dance riff, took the scenic route. And there was a drumless ballad passage in another tune that was so delicate the audience held its breath, afraid to disturb the ethereal counterpoint.

It didn't sound like *Live in Japan:* that was a different band, much more attached to jazz/swing time than to the rock 4/4. Later versions of Weather Report have learned to harness rock bashing, and—miraculously—to do so without cramping anyone's style. Putting rock power behind improvisation seemed like it'd be easy in the early '70s rash of fusion, but only the Mahavishnu Orchestra (for a short time) and Weather Report pulled it off, because they refused to condescend to rock. While Erskine isn't the best drummer Weather Report have ever had (I still prefer Ndugu Leon Chancler), he's been with the band long enough to meet Shorter, Zawinul and Pastorius as equals; when he backs a full-band riff,

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

BY DAVID BRESKIN

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

he's a cymbal-slinging elemental, and in dialogues he listens as hard as he plays. In fact, that willingness to listen is what keeps Weather Report, even at its implest and riffiest and most structured, from becoming an instrumental rock band: they hear each other, and their jazz-honed reflexes mean they can act on what they hear whenever they want to.

In a night of curveballs, the most unexpected one was that Weather Report actually played a cover: Duke Ellington's "Rockin' in Rhythm." It was perfect, not only for its title, but for the way the band tore into it. They treated its bluesy line as they'd treat anything Shorter or Zawinul might have come up with, hard and swinging, while behind it Zawinul punched sustained modal Fender Rhodes chords off the beats in trademark style. In totally regrooving Ellington, Weather Report asserted their continuity with jazz tradition, simultaneously proving they had something of their own to add to it.

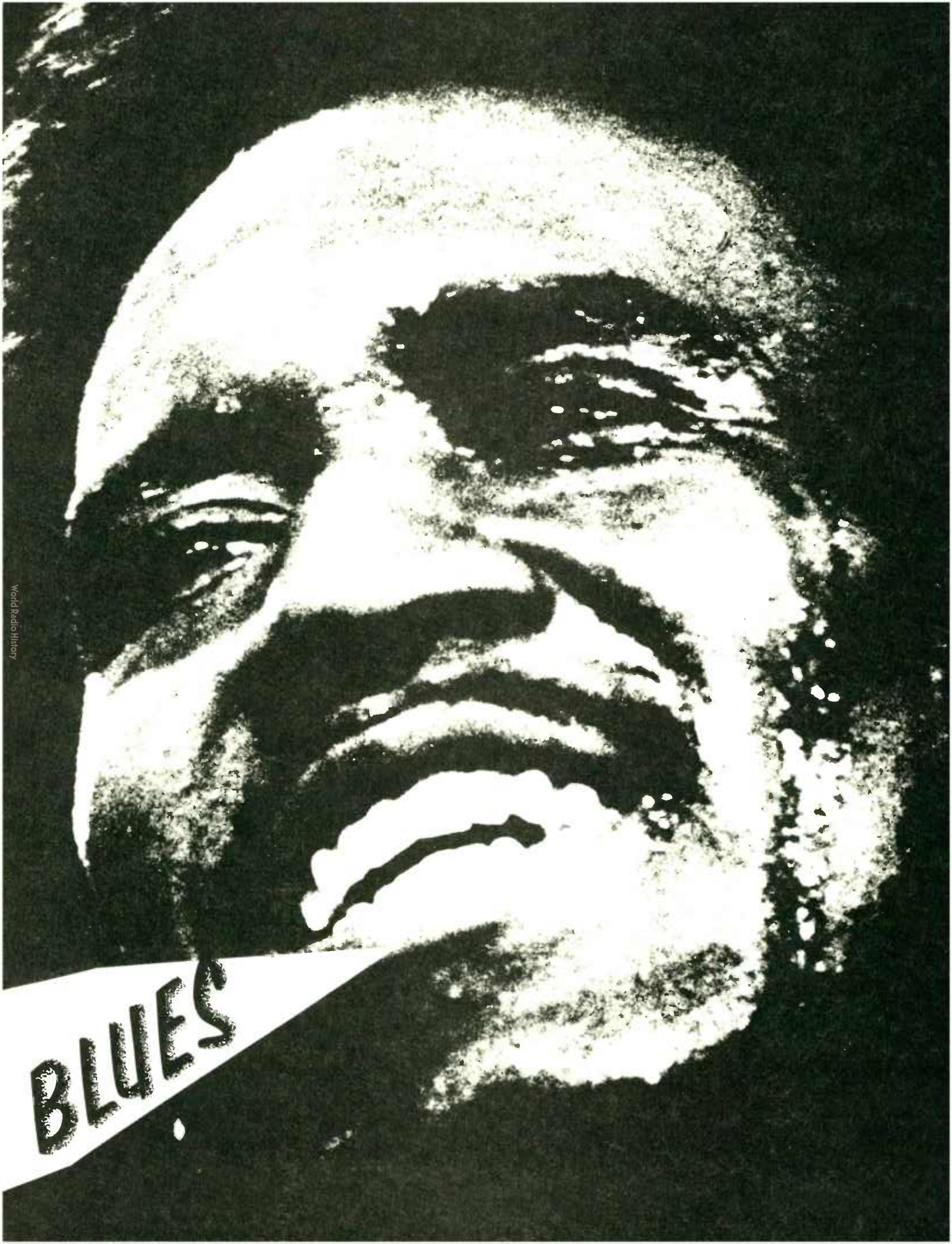
What did the audience—some of whom were doubtless unfamiliar with Ellington—make of it? Well, they were taken care of with a surprisingly tasteful slide show that montaged shots of city streets and all of the icons of jazz, from Louis Armstrong to Miles Davis. For visual interest elsewhere, there was a spooky blue-and-green light show behind one sustained, elegaic tune, and of course Pastorius disported himself throughout the concert. Basically, however, Weather Report played to their own better instincts and dared the audience to hang on. Which is as it should be. A band this good shouldn't let anything like crowd expectations or some fool's idea of pop accessibility affect them, and they didn't let anything stand in their way. As if anything could.

Over the steady blowing of noses on fall's first cool night, Arthur Blythe blew into the Vanguard in the manner that's sure to spoil us all if we're not careful: the bright tone uncolored by recording technology, the caressing intonation shaded with that almost vulnerable waver and wobble, the steel logic of his flights informing take-offs and landings of impeccable order. Bill Evans leapt out of photos on the walls, a few nights after his death, and Blythe took good care of the place, having been granted sole custody for the week.

With his rhythm section comprised mostly of Air—sometimes hot and heavy, sometimes crisp and cool—Blythe individualized standards ("'Round Midnight," "Caravan," and "Naima" could hardly be in better hands), expanded upon originals in the classic context of horn-with-rhythm quartet, and played an (I think) unrecorded tune—full of steam and alto exhaust and wet pavement at a slow tempo, like a theme from a grim '50s murder mystery— filled the room with warmth where it wasn't with people.

Steve McCall and Fred Hopkins, the Swann and Stallworth of rhythm sections, loped and sprinted and cut and criss-crossed and came back to grab the soloist time and time again. Pianist John Hicks took Franco's roll; powerful, fast, slicing, he seemed ready to push the piano through the Vanguard's back wall. If you came late to see Betty Carter the last few years, you missed one of our most underappreciated mainstream pianists improvising in the open field.

The attitude of In The Tradition is essentially conservative, in the best sense of that term. Evolutionary rather than revolutionary. "Accessible," as radio programmers like to say. On the whole, not a bad idea for the '80s. In the two sets I heard, the members' individual virtuosity was thankfully present, though needfully balanced with the sort of democratic tension and generosity of spirit that has typically marked the greatest ensembles. So we have McCall's anticipated echoes, Hicks' responsive chords, Hopkins' complements and criticisms, Blythe's sublime flight patterns: enough for any pair of ears, I would think.



BY AARON FUCHS

Since the blues is a repository of tradition, it's probably harder to measure a year's worth of changes in the idiom than in pop, rock or r&b. Nevertheless, things seem definitely different this year in terms of both the state of the idiom on the home front and, almost as importantly, in how blues is perceived in other parts of the world, notably, Europe and Scandinavia, who are almost as responsible as we are for the livelihoods of scores of black blues artists.

In America, the geographical fragmentation that has affected every other aspect of the music biz shows here, too. More than ever before, blues has become the province of the small, neighborhood label, whether it's Chicago's Rooster (an adjunct of the Living Blues and Blues Unlimited Publications); Memphis' Earwig (which kicked in with a couple of nice albums by the Jelly Roll Kings and Walter Horton and friends); or the production units of Bruce Bromberg in Los Angeles (for Alligator) or Dan Doyle in New York (Rounder).

The most significant domestic development saw the revitalization of the blues as a music by and for black people (whose rejection of the idiom in the 60's and 70's was one of bluesmen's greatest complaints, then). We started to get our first indication of this phenomenon in the late 70s, when, in the midst of the disco explosion Henry Stone's TK label (itself, one of the most prolific issuers of disco music) began also releasing records by Willie "Little Beaver" Hale, McKinley Mitchell, Little Milton, and Otis Clay, men who were either directly involved with blues, or with soul music so deep and remote, it became the blues' latter day equivalent (for example O.V. Wright's Memphis recording of "The Hurt Is On," while technically a soul record, dealt with the recession more pointedly and with more passion than any strict "blues" performance). This trend has been continued most dramatically with the recordings of the Jackson, Mississippi-based Malaco label who have recorded Mitchell and soul-bluesman Z.Z. Hill. Hill, a harsh-voiced loveman squarely in the style of Bobby Bland, whose brilliant self-titled album alternated reworkings of "Blue Monday" (not the Fats Domino song) with such new blues as "Chained to Your Love," and whose orientation to a contemporary black audience gave them an originality of style absent in almost all blues recordings made by and for white people.

HARVEY WANG

In Chicago, The National Academy of the Blues, an organization dedicated to the preservation of the blues, was formed, and its constituency was both black and white, while in New York, blues music could be heard in the Harlem club scene for the first time in fifteen years.

One artist, who appears to be on the road to greater national success as a result of his Harlem tenure is Johnny Copeland. Copeland is a singer-guitarist deeply rooted in the Texas City-blues tradition; when he plays a fast shuffle, the ghost of T-Bone Walker rises, and his debut Rounder album offers a refreshing change of pace from the well-meaning, but stultifyingly samey Chicago blues style that suffuses almost every record on more prolific labels like Alligator.

The change of pace that Copeland offers has not gone unappreciated in Europe, where extensive recordings and reissues of bluesmen have come to shape the blues scene almost as much as domestic developments. The important German collector and fanzine operator, Gunter Hess, shared the opinion of his peers when he recently told us at a doo-wop show in L.A., "I'm burnt on Chicago blues, and am much more interested in Texas, Louisiana and California blues"; the influence of these diverse regional styles will probably be the focus of next year's wrap-up.

THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS

BY DON SNOWDEN

PAUL COX/RETNA LTD

Reports predicting the imminent death of the blues have been rife through the latter half of the '70s but, as Chicago guitarist Son Seals says, no one seems to be able to find the corpse. The Fabulous Thunderbirds are keeping the music alive and kicking and the quartet's lean, mean brand of Texas-Louisiana blues, honed by years of four-set-a-night club gigs, is attracting a growing audience ranging from traditional blues aficionados to the more roots-conscious segment of the punk-bred audience.

Veterans of long stints backing leading bluesmen around the country, the T-birds draw heavily on classic models without succumbing to the habitual pitfalls plaguing most young blues bands. Their forays into the archives for cover material yield obscure gems rather than overdone standards and they never approach blues as reverential revivalists unearthing a cultural artifact. The Thunderbirds come to make an audience dance and their lack of visual flash onstage is matched by a steadfast refusal to play three notes when one will suffice.

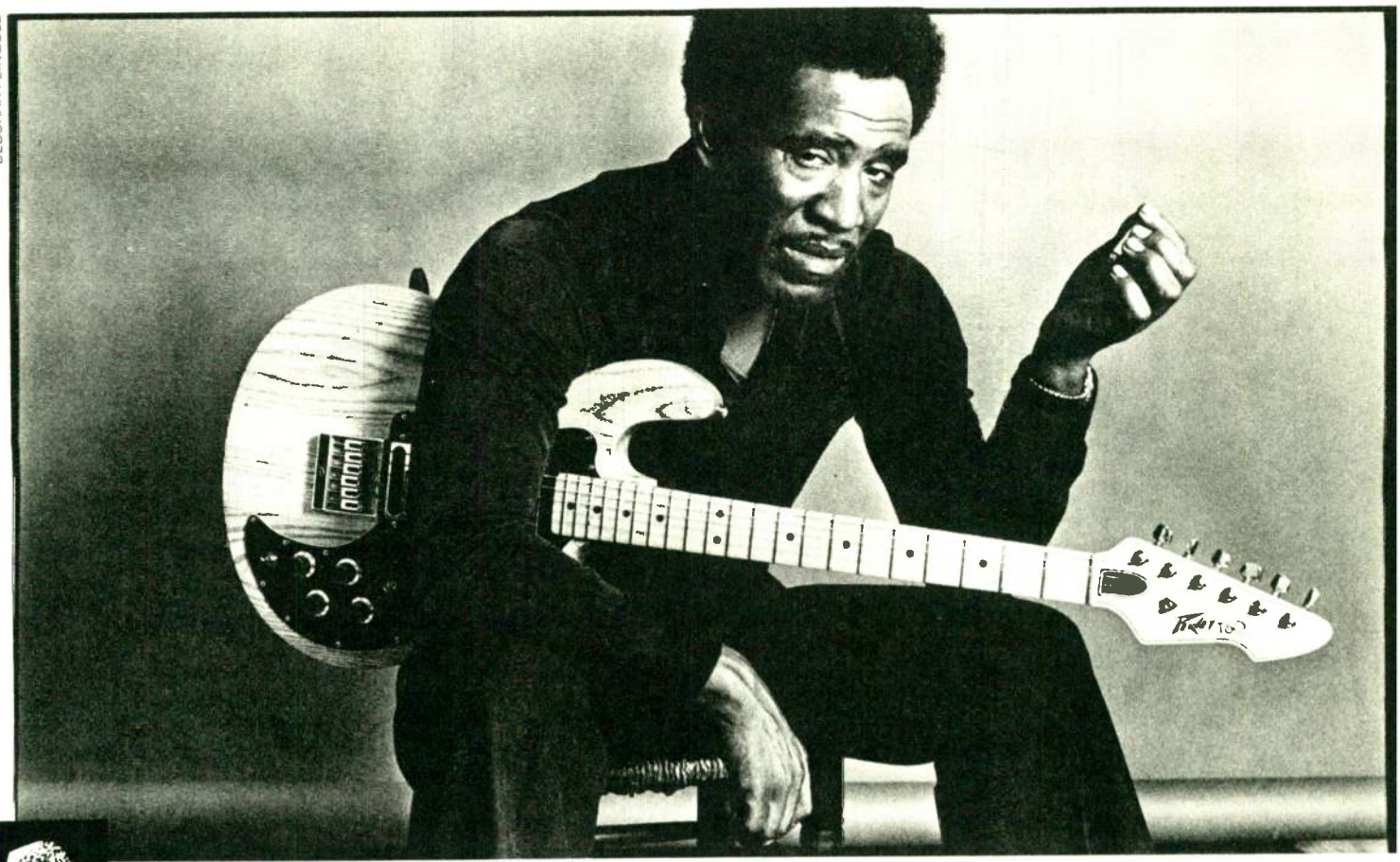
Kim Wilson's emotionally convincing vocals and deft harmonica work evoke the Windy City masters without falling into slavish imitation. Fran Christina's solid percussive foundation meshes with Keith Ferguson's loping bass lines to supply the supple, stripped-to-the-bone grooves that set off guitarist Jimmy Vaughan's spare rhythm comping and fiery yet economical leads.

The Thunderbirds' eponymous Takoma/Chrysalis debut album is an adequate albeit thoroughly muted assortment of Wilson originals and covers that barely hints at the accomplished power of its successor, *What's The Word*. Opening with a deadly one-two punch—a brutally effective reworking of Juke Boy Bonner's "Running Shoes" followed by the sprightly Cajun romp "You Ain't Nothing But Fine"—the album lives up to the implicit boast of the title and stands as one of 1980's premier releases in any genre.

The Thunderbirds recently took a breather from the sessions for their third album (scheduled for release early next year, the LP will reportedly include a couple of tracks cut with the Roomful of Blues horn section) to play a one-nighter at the Whiskey in Los Angeles. The pair of assured, easy-grooving performances typically pointed to the most salient characteristics of a T-birds live show; these guys not only are masters at working the grooves they lock into but take their time in getting to where they're going without resorting to superfluous padding.

The Fabulous Thunderbirds are the genuine article and I suspect their brand of blues will keep moving audiences for years to come. Check 'em out.

BY JOHN SWENSON



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

By the mid-'70s it seemed that all the inroads blues made in the popular audience during the '60s had been wiped out. Many of the older players were dying off, and even such perennial greats as B.B. King were forced to alter their recording styles to accommodate the homogenizing demands of disco production. But in the '80s the blues has once again caught the public interest and as a result one of the greatest living blues guitarists, Johnny Copeland, has suddenly reemerged from obscurity and released a powerful new album.

Copeland Special is as polished and sophisticated a blues record as you'll ever hear. Yet the record isn't slick, but intensely powerful, the statement of a man who's been holding back his message for a lifetime.

In the 1950's, when the market for blues was strong but provincial enough to be strictly regional, Copeland was as big a star as there was in Texas, easily as popular as such national entities as B.B. King. There was no album market for what he was doing at the time, so Copeland released a series of singles, only one of which, "Down On Bended Knee," ever got any national exposure. A series of personal setbacks and management gaffes reduced Copeland to penury. By the '70s he made a living picking up gigs in Harlem, where he ended up with a residency at the Top Club, in between forays back to Houston.

For the past three years producer Dan Doyle and Copeland's musical director, keyboardist Ken Vangel, scraped and sweated to put together Copeland's first album. Their faith in his genius and his own patience with the inevitable delays and disappointments finally paid off when Rounder records agreed to buy the project, which had been independently financed from a shoestring budget.

The final product is probably one of the best blues albums in history. Copeland's brilliant, intensely emotional singing and clean, fluid guitar playing make him the greatest Texas guitarist since the masterful T-Bone Walker. His writing demonstrates an equal facility with rocking, uptempo blasts or soulful slow blues. "Claim Jumper" kicks off the album at a torrid pace, the fatback rhythm section urging Johnny on as he slices knife-hot guitar fills and gutsy vocal lines between ripping horn passages. Vangel's excellent horn arrangements are executed by an astonishing section that includes some of the top jazz players working today. The great Arthur Blythe plays alto and solos on the title track; Byard Lancaster doubles on alto and tenor and solos on "It's My Own Tears" and "Big Time"; Joe Rigby plays baritone and cuts the "Claim Jumper" solo; George "Pepper" Adams plays tenor and soprano and solos on four tracks.

One of the most extraordinary moments comes in the finale, when Copeland sings the W.C. Handy classic "St. Louis Blues" in awesome, funeral style. This song has been covered by virtually every major jazz and blues singer in history and Copeland takes a lot on his plate to try it, but his reading is so magnificently beautiful it subtly recasts the tune once more, which is as great a tribute as I can give to the man. It's a measure of his enormous talent that Copeland's guitar playing, which is at the apex of the style, is overshadowed on this set by his unbelievable singing.

BY FRED SCHRUERS

The only visual analogue to the world of reggae in 1981 might be an Escher drawing. You look into it, starting at one edge, and find some figure or some row of shapes that looks like a path. But what looks like a static nexus of inked lines turns into a whorl, and the eye backs off, and you end up looking at the face of Bob Marley, 1945-1981. This is not a note of despair; it is simply to say that in death, as in life, Marley provided a wholeness to that world.

In July, 1980, I watched Marley entrance a crowd of 52,000 at Le Bourget outside Paris; in May, 1981, I looked down into his glass-lined coffin as he lay looking frail, peaceful and heartbreaking with a Bible and a Stratocaster. Two months later, I was watching Black Uhuru transform the Palladium—spectral Duckie Simpson, the burning-eyed, Shiva-dancing Puma, and fervid singer Michael Rose—and it cleaved me to my guts with hope and relief. The last two people to leave the stage were bassist Robbie Shakespeare and drummer Sly Drumbar, and that was right, too—the two master musicians had become impresarios and spearheads for a reggae efflorescence distinct from the work of Marley and his Wailers, and their emergence was not into the gap left by Marley's death—large as that gap was—but into a field they'd cleared for themselves.

In the summer of 1980, I'd been on tour with Marley in Spain and France, reporting for a story planned to coincide with his likely emergence as a genuine, million-selling artist in the States. He went on to England and Ireland, I to Egypt. We met up again in Island Records' hotel suite on Central Park South, where Lister Hewan-Lowe (the hidden mover in much of reggae's U.S. progress) had brought me along to fetch him for Brooklyn's West Indian Day Parade. I knew Marley could be laconic; his entire reply to my spiel outlining plans for the article had been "seen" and "cool." But this day, after one bright smile, he was somber—taking sick, I guess, and puzzled about it. He didn't make the parade. Not long after, kicking a soccer ball through Central Park with his friend Alan "Skilly" Cole, he collapsed. The diagnosis was melanoma, brain cancer, and they gave him three weeks. He lived eight months, finally succumbing to lung cancer after improving somewhat under the care of Dr. Josef Issels in Bavaria. Immediately after Marley's death, Island head Chris Blackwell, who had spent a good part of the year producing a film starring Countryman (a kind of Noble Savage, Rasta mystic and fisherman) threw himself into documenting the funeral rites on film. Most of the Wailers attended a family-and-friends service in Miami, then accompanied the body to Kingston, Jamaica. Marley lay in state in the National Arena, guitar and Bible in hand, as an estimated 100,000 people stood in the broiling sun waiting to file by one by one.

That night, at Tuff Gong Studios, the Wailers assembled to work out the songs they would play at the next day's services. Guitarist-singer Junior Marvin, who would share singing duties the next day with the I-Threes and Bob's mother, Cedella Booker, led the session with great reserve and quiet authority. Mrs. Booker's own composition, an ever-so-gently rocking hymn called "Hail", was stunning. She spooled it out in a voice that had a raspy edge not unlike her son's.

The next day at the Arena, Marley's sons Ziggy and Steven danced to the band as Junior Marvin stepped aside. Ziggy, not yet a man but more than a boy, danced with a fierce joy, stooping, half-stepping, leaping, pitching back and forth in a way that (again) recalled Marley. There were readings and speeches—from Skilly, Prime Minister Edwin Seaga (himself an erstwhile ethnomusicologist, and a sympathetic orator), the Governor-General, and various churchmen.

Then began the long afternoon ride to Marley's birthplace in St. Ann's, Jamaica's north coast. A long motorcade wound through the hills, grinding up a pebbly dirt road till it gave out. Then they dismounted—the white-clothed members of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (a Rastafarian religious group), the world press, dignitaries and fans—and climbed a steep path on foot. Some 9,000 people perched on the hillside around the wooden cottage where Bob and Rita lived for the first six years of their marriage.

The interment of Marley's casket in its hilltop mausoleum was confused and disorderly—almost as if his revolutionary ardor was making itself felt before they slid him into the crypt. As the sun began setting, though, the stillness of the lush sub-tropical patch of hill near the sea (Marley had often sat under the tree here, composing songs) reasserted itself. The melody that seemed to hover, as people filed away, was from "Rastaman Chant": *One bright morning when my work is over man will fly away home . . .*

Black Uhuru, of course, are not the sole inheritors of that work. It would seem natural for Bunny Wailer and Peter Tosh, Bob's cronies from the Wailing Wailers, to make their mark. Bunny had a lulling album of Wailers re-dos out this year, and Tosh continues to be prolific and musically keen. But Bunny has yet to stake out an audience, and Tosh, who supplied the Rolling Stones with Third World cachet and in turn got a record deal and ample promo, has lately seemed more and more self-aggrandizing in his rhetoric.

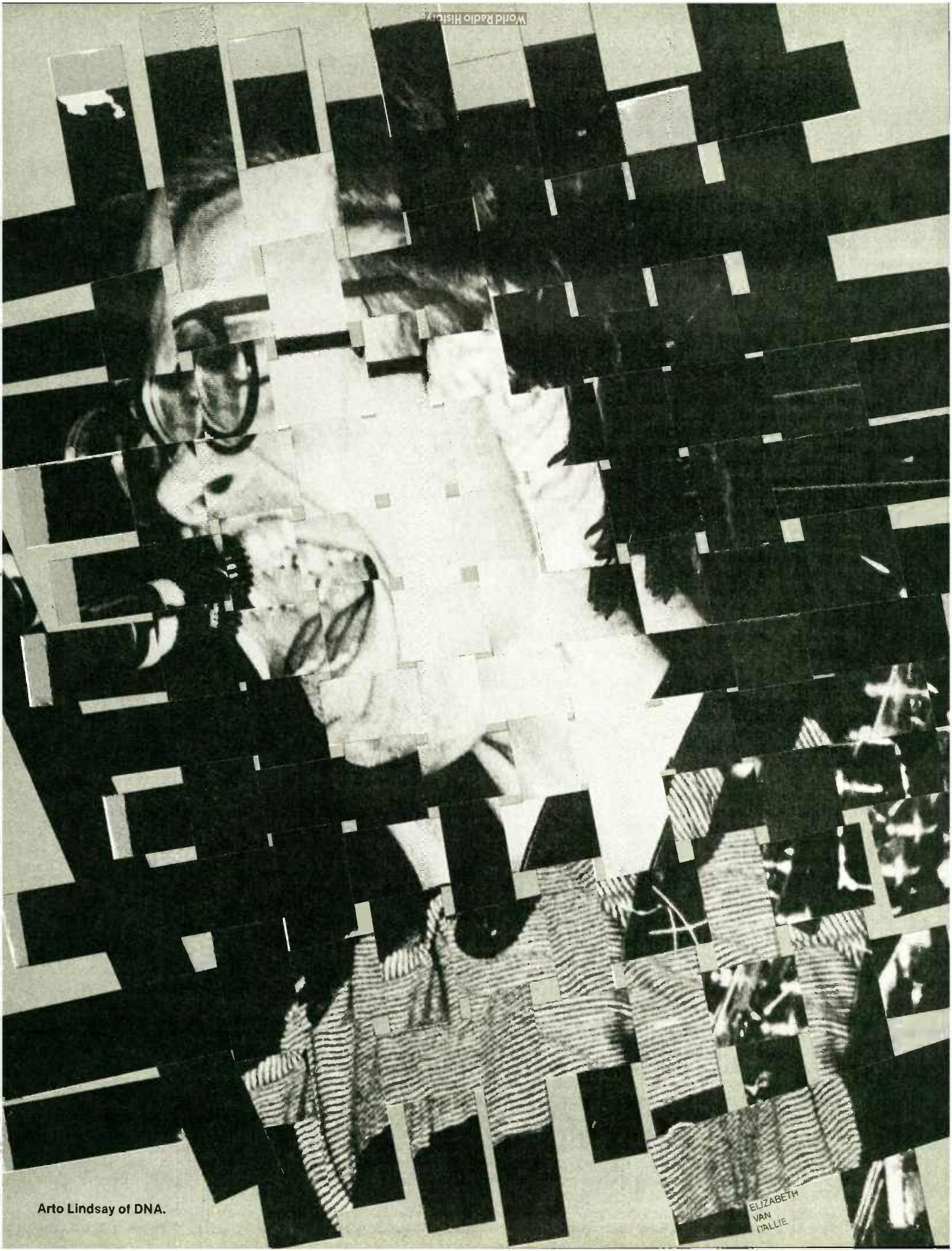
The Brooklyn-based Jah Malla seemed to have a real crossover potential on record; live, they showed curious heavy metal and psychedelic streaks. "Naturally, after 11 years of listening to music in this country, we have an American influence, just like Steel Pulse has an English influence," Jah Malla's Cleon Douglas told an interviewer. The important difference is that Steel Pulse, from industrial Birmingham, has "rootsier" influences.

Jimmy Cliff continues working, but his glory days may well be over unless he regains his former vibrancy. Dennis Brown, long a commercial success in England and Jamaica, has been hampered here by canceled gigs. His very success has made him seem like less of an original than say, Toots Hibbert, a fulsomely energetic performer who is joyously spiritual in a way that may be too fundamental for a fickle U.S. audience looking for the exotic in reggae artists. None of these reggae acts, Marley included, has made a serious incursion into the black market—a problem which they have been pondering for years without coming up with either reason or solution.

Thus such worthies as Big Youth, Burning Spear, Culture, Dillinger, Mikey Dread, Joe Gibbon, Linton Kwesi Johnson, the Mighty Diamonds, Eddy Grant, Augustus Pablo, Max Romeo, Tapper Zukie etc. survive as minor cult figures here.

The successful commercial adaptation of reggae by The Police (like the Clash's well intentioned dalliances) actually represents a slim branch of the movement. And, despite the relative success which groups like The Specials, The Selecter and the English Beat have had in bringing their ska variations across the water (the purer reggae of UB40 has not fared so well), they are still regarded as novelties or dance bands here—not the forerunners of a movement.

So reggae, even without its king (though Marley will have two or perhaps more posthumous albums out within the year) will continue to gain ground in the States. But its practitioners will continue to be nettled by the belief that there's a vast audience just around the corner they are somehow not reaching.



Arto Lindsay of DNA.

NEW MUSIC

BY JON PARALES

There's nothing more self-conscious than a self-styled avant-garde—and nothing that gets obsolete easier. The artists involved seem to spend a lot of time looking over their shoulders: dreaming of/dreading mainstream acceptance, searching for funds in the meantime, nervously awaiting rejection by the *next* avant-garde. All under the scrutiny of media—in mass, specialist, and in-group sizes—that rush to canonize and cannibalize new aesthetic notions, shunting them in and out of the spotlight like other "fashion trends." It's a tricky position for any artist whose vision isn't armor-clad, and an even tricker one for anyplace purporting to be an avant-garde "institution"—which tends to be a contradiction from the get-go.

These natterings are prompted by the tenth anniversary celebration of the Kitchen, probably the best-known (to foundation grantors, the NEA, and the *New York Times*, anyway) avant-garde hotspot in America. For two "Aluminum Nights" in June, Kitchen regulars and sympathizers staged marathon shows at Bond's disco (which is a lot larger than the Kitchen's SoHo loft) as a benefit for next year's artists' fees. There was music by Philip Glass, George Lewis (currently the Kitchen's music director), DNA, Julius Hemphill, Laura Dean, Todd Rundgren, Glenn Branca, Love of Life Orchestra, Steve Reich's musicians, Lydia Lunch, the Raybeats, and others; videotapes and installations by or of Nam June Paik, Brian Eno, Shalom Gorewitz, the Kipper Kids, Public Image Ltd., and others; various dance troupes, and performance hybrids by Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson, and Robert Ashley. It wasn't a historically accurate summation of the last ten years of the Kitchen or the New York scene, but it provided some illumination on the fate of the '70s avant-garde.

Cynics at the benefit suggested that what happened in the '70s was the continuation of the '60s avant-garde by other means. Watching three TV screens worth of Eno's varicolor New York skyline (and recalling Andy Warhol's Empire State Building film), I could've agreed. And like most of the self-conscious vanguards of this century, '70s types made their own attempts to defy categories, to meld various arts, and to come to terms with technology. Naturally, there were some '60s holdovers and some direct follow-ups—where would Reich, Glass, et al. have been without La Monte Young?—although the technology (videot), the dress code and many of the participants were new. The telltale change, however, was in vocabulary and attitude: the '70s avant-garde replaced "cosmic" with "interesting." No more of that goofy, awe-struck, vaguely deistic hippie stuff—art experiments in the '70s would be conducted in a dispassionate, value-free state of mind. Instead of invoking murky mystical ideals or programmatic manifestos, the '70s avant-garde simply claimed what Robert Fripp, prefacing a Kitchen concert, called "the right to be boring."

Just like oh-wow hippies, but with clearer heads, Kitchen audiences were generally willing to suspend judgment for the duration of an "event" (not a "happening," by the way). Where '60s vanguardists would throw in anything that looked vaguely useful, '70s types tended to be exclusive, carefully limiting their devices. People at new-music concerts might listen to a single note with its pitch being varied infinitesimally at great length, or to simple patterns repeated over and over, or to free improvisations, or—as at the Kitchen-sponsored "New Music, New York" festival in 1979—to pieces like William Hellermann's "Squeek," written for the various-register tones produced by an unlubricated swivel chair, on which Hellermann had developed remarkably pre-

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Glenn Branca

cise buttocks technique. Some of the "boring" stuff turned out to be just that; some was self-indulgent; some, like "Squeek," made the most out of a fascinating dead end, and some was not only "interesting" but influential.

In the course of the '70s, minimalism—those simple repeated patterns—escaped the avant-garde and found itself an audience. Although some minimal procedures germinated in the '60s, the Kitchen (with its media savvy and status as an "institution") has been closely associated with the growing respect accorded Glass, Reich, and fellow travelers including Laura Dean, Michael Nyman, Eno, and others. As art music goes, minimalism has definitely hit the bigtime. Instead of playing for 200 people at the Kitchen, Glass and Reich can each sell out Carnegie Hall annually. As for outreach, their ideas have filtered into pop music via Talking Heads, XTC, Feelies, Public Image Ltd., David Bowie, Robert Fripp, even Giorgio Moroder and the Police. Perhaps because minimalism dovetails with the drone of rock and the repetition of funk (Reich has studied the African connection in Ghana), there's no culture shock between pop and this facet of the avant-garde. The presence of the benefit program of the Raybeats (surf-minimalism), Bush Tetras (hard-funk minimalism), Love of Life Orchestra (atonal jam-funk minimalism), Lydia Lunch (abrasive minimalism) and Red Decade (suite minimalism) showed how much cross-fertilization has occurred. Throughout the '70s, art types have kept a close, admiring watch on pop culture, and vice versa. Downtown New York even offered propinquity: the Kitchen's first home was the literal kitchen of the Mercer Arts Center—where the New York Dolls reigned—because there was space for video equipment and concerts. The art-punk connection now attracts a slew of poseurs, yet the current new-music composer still seems more eager to be John Lydon than John Cage.

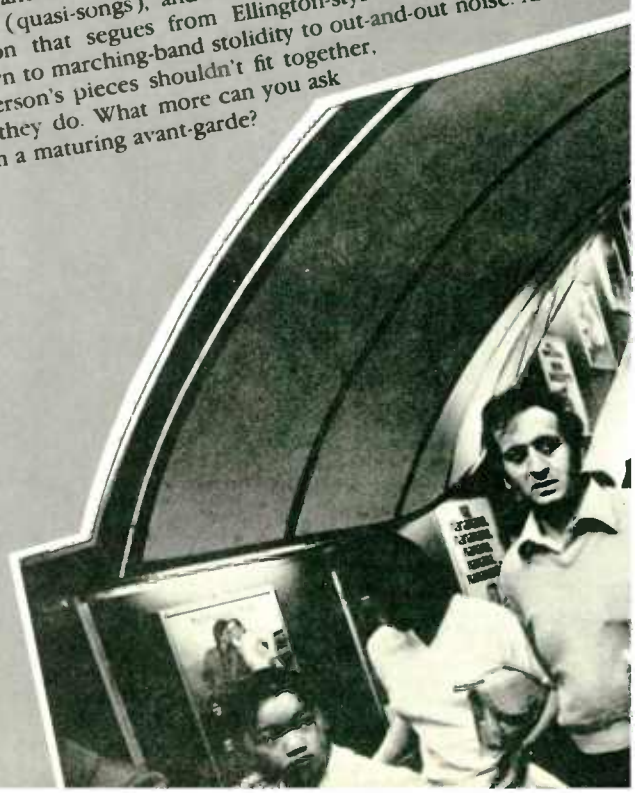
Not that new-music composers are writing pop songs. The static-harmony, simple-rhythms repetition that rock picked up on is only one aspect of what Reich and Glass (and Meredith Monk and George Lewis and Glenn Branca and Robert Ashley and Laurie Anderson and Rhys Chatham) are doing. With the occasional exception of Monk and Anderson, these composers use time-spans much longer than the average pop tune, and they don't honor pop's clear distinctions between foreground and background. Glass' music has as much melody in the bass and midrange as in the treble, and it's so information-packed that it seems to refer to the whole of music history; allusions I heard for the first time at the Bond's performances of "Dance No.3" and "Train Spaceship" included German oompah bands, "Chopsticks," dervish chants, Buxtehude organ polyphony and Romantic woodwind twitters. Glenn Branca's "The Ascension of Christ," the most galvanizing piece I heard at the benefit, was simpler: battering-ram drums and bass behind four noisy electric guitars playing tremolo chords, their overtones combining and colliding and reverberating, in a low slow crescendo that culminated in three volcanic power chords. Like Ravel's and Stravinsky's approximations of early jazz, Branca's music has nothing to do with pop structure, but it wouldn't exist if he didn't have an earful of rock & roll.

Few of the other acts on the bill were such showstoppers; true to the Kitchen's past, there were experiments, including flops like the Feelies' percussion-and-guitar instrumentals (they sounded like inner tracks from *Crazy Rhythms*) and poet John Giorno's echoplexed rant, in which the technology overwhelmed the meaning. George Lewis' "Atlantic" called for a trombone quartet to sustain unison and near-unison notes for tests of overtone perception, overly reminiscent of Stockhausen's *Stimmung*. Nor was minimalism the only permitted style. Julius Hemphill improvised on a bluesy, innocent melody while K. Curtis Lyle danced; DNA played a set of their laconic yet grating no-wave; and Maryanne Amacher sat primly behind an electronic console and unleashed vast, oceanic surges of sound in "Critical Band."

On the interesting/self-indulgent borderline was Garrett List's "The Kids Are Hungry," a half-sung, half-played "cantata" for voice and trombone, sort of a thinking-man's equivalent of a talking blues. There was also a streak of opportunism—something the Kitchen generally avoids—in the appearance of noted videophile Todd Rundgren (singing hippy-dippy acoustic protest songs), of Oliver Lake's execrable Jump Up (a sellout attempt that's not even funny, much less funky; Lake's singing should be punishable by law) and of Jim Carroll, who read a passage that managed to combine his two basic shticks—heroin and Catholicism—into its opening sentences. Ten years ago, playing at the Kitchen meant a chance for in-group exposure; now it confers legitimacy like any other institution.

The '70s avant-garde had a heightened awareness of context; in fact, the only thing that united most Kitchen events was the notion of "performance"—the realization that every presentation involves some sort of transition with the audience, whether it was a collusion, a ritual, a confrontation, an amusement, a put-on. The audience participation of the '60s turned into the audience self-consciousness of the '70s: if the emperor was, indeed, nude, was it cool to say so? Conceptualism (and considerable intensity of execution) strikes again.

The implications of "performance"—something rockers have always considered—inspired composers and visual artists to come up with a new hybrid in the '70s: performance art, a catchall term for experimental presentations that weren't exactly concerts or drama or dance or whatever. Quite a few performance pieces turned out to be eclectic, pretentious duds, but the benefit included three good ones. Meredith Monk's "Turtle Dreams (Waltz)" will no doubt stand on its own as music when ECM releases it in August, as a minimal minor-key vamp for electric keyboards with four-part vocal polyphony; in performance, the singers also dance in patterns, and a woman in a white hoop skirt drifts across the stage at the end, enigmatically. Robert Ashley's *Perfect Lives (Private Parts)*, portions of which are on two Lovely Music LPs, sounds like a bluesy vamp with deadpan narration, but it's actually a made-for-television opera, and its videotape version has so much going on that it'll take more than one (or ten) viewings to figure out all the connections. Most eclectic of all was Laurie Anderson's "Songs from United States," excerpts from her four-part magnum opus, which uses koan-like texts, slides and film and shadow projections, minimal vamps with lyrics (quasi-songs), and in one grand non-sequitur, a sax section that segues from Ellington-style chords to James Brown to marching-band stolidity to out-and-out noise. All of Anderson's pieces shouldn't fit together, but they do. What more can you ask from a maturing avant-garde?



PETER GABRIEL

BY JON PARELES

Gabriel writes about fantasies, states of (someone's) mind, real or imagined characters in real or imagined situations, virtually anything except himself; his protagonists are the shiftiest "I"s in rock. In the age of the marketing strategy, Gabriel is perversely polymorphous, completely ignoring even the possibility of an image for himself. While it seems every solo act in pop—from Bruce Springsteen to Carly Simon—virtually trademarks a songwriting persona, a limited public image, Gabriel prefers to disappear in and around his characters—an invisible puppeteer.

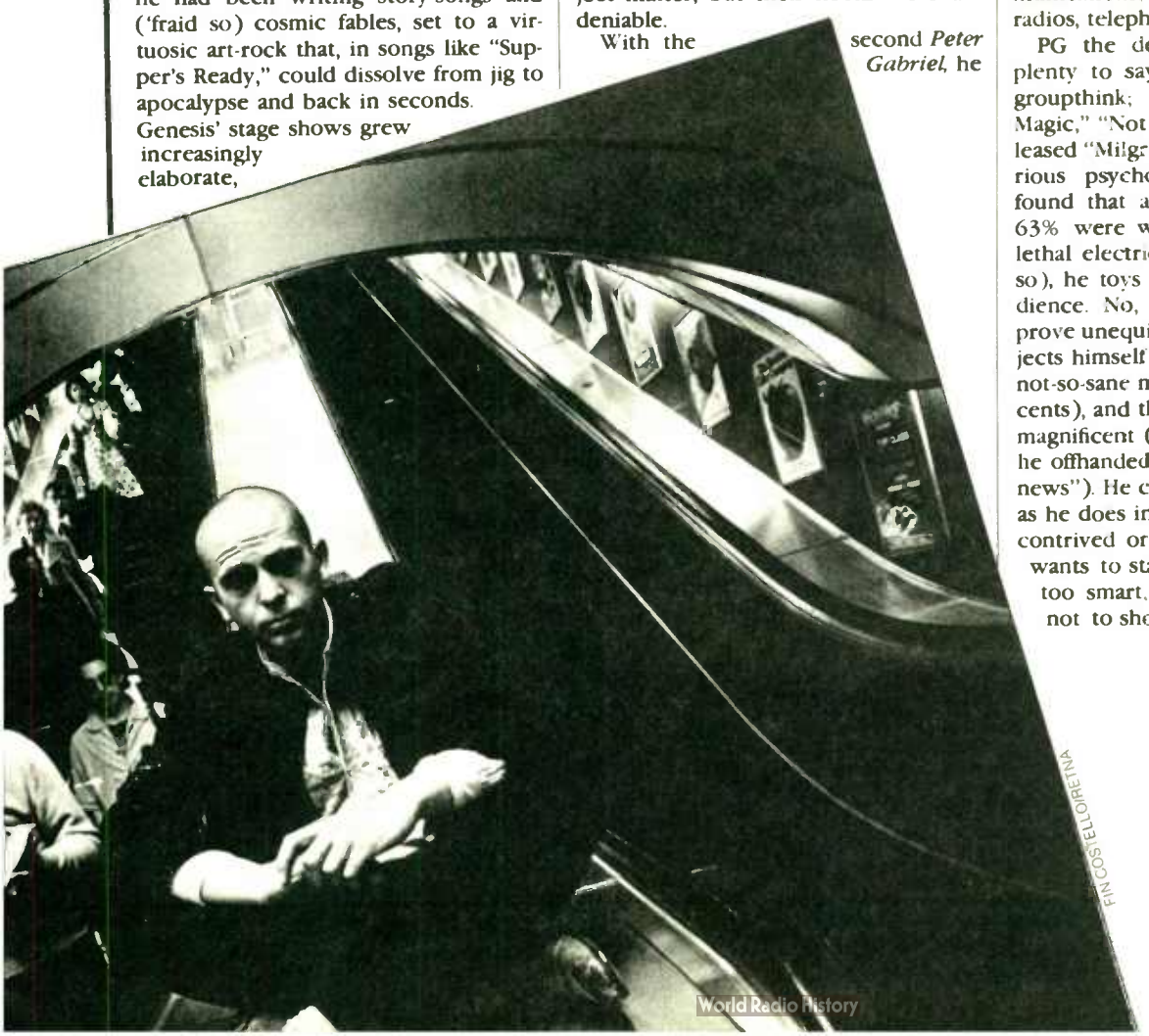
Not only does Gabriel refuse to stick to one verbal point of view; he also shrugs off anything like a trademark sound. Although his voice—hoarse, desperate, singing rhymes like an ancient mariner—is distinctive, its setting keeps shifting, song to song, album to album. If he'd wanted marketable "consistency," he'd have stayed with Genesis, the band he founded in prep school in 1967 and steered all the way to the arena circuit before quitting in 1975. With Genesis, he had been writing story-songs and ('fraid so) cosmic fables, set to a virtuosic art-rock that, in songs like "Supper's Ready," could dissolve from jig to apocalypse and back in seconds. Genesis' stage shows grew increasingly elaborate, with frontman Gabriel done up in costumes that grew more and more ridiculous; having stuck with the band through the rock opera *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway,* Gabriel bid large-scale pretension and echo-y arpeggios goodbye, leaving Genesis to become the late-70s version of the Moody Blues.

And while Genesis plodded around the arenas, lasers in hand, Gabriel took an imaginative leap—instead of portraying stories literally, he decided to trust his audience and let them envision his songs in their mind's eyes. Gabriel's first post-Genesis solo album (entitled, like the next two, *Peter Gabriel*—his only consistent move, and a confusing one to all concerned) tried blues, barbershop quartets, heavy metal, 7/4 folk-rock, and full orchestra—anything to shake off the stultifying sameness of Genesis's who-put-the-pomp sound. Gabriel scaled his stories down to masquerade as pop songs, but unlike most pop they defied the listener to identify with them, and they didn't provide the jaunty amiability of Genesis tunes. Out of Genesis, though, Gabriel's songwriting tightened its focus; his songs might have off subject matter, but their hooks were undeniable.

With the second *Peter Gabriel,* he faltered. Robert Fripp was and is a fine sideman but not the right producer; he seemed to want to place Gabriel's voice in an indistinct backdrop that sounded too much like Son of Genesis. But the third Gabriel solo LP is a triumph. Gabriel (as will be seen below) had decided to think solely in terms of the studio sound, and with synthesist Larry Fast he's learning to tease out timbral nuances that no one else in rock cares about. The third *Peter Gabriel* still has its singer playing hide-and-seek in its songs, but the vestiges of art-rock filigree have been burned off, and the rhythms brought forward, so that the distance implied by Gabriel's role-playing wars with the immediacy of the sound—like the squeamish, enlightening sensation you'd get from a film shot entirely in close-up. And there are still six more tracks from these sessions awaiting release.

With three Gabriel solo LPs, it's tempting to try and make connections, to trap the elusive PG persona in a net of his own images. But all there is to catch is more paradox: PG the invisible man is obsesse with electronic communications; his songs are filled with radios, telephones, TV cameras, wires.

PG the dedicated individualist has plenty to say about identity loss and groupthink; in songs like "Animal Magic," "Not One of Us," and the unreleased "Milgram's 37" (based on a notorious psychology experiment which found that among average Americans, 63% were willing to administer near-lethal electric shocks if ordered to do so), he toys with conformity and obedience. No, the only thing his lyrics prove unequivocally is that Gabriel projects himself marvelously into sane and not-so-sane minds (he does prefer innocents), and that his sense of language is magnificent (in one song, for instance, he offhandedly equates "TV dinner, TV news"). He can write from real outrage, as he does in "Biko," without sounding contrived or self-righteous. Well, if he wants to stay hidden, that's fine—he's too smart, and his ears are too good, not to show us that he's in there.



FIN COSTELLO/RETNA

Surf Music

BY DAVE MARSH

The first thing I ever wrote that made it past the bedroom door was a 25-words-or-less essay on "Why I Like the Beach Boys" for a local radio station contest, in which the prize was a copy of their live album. What I liked about the Beach Boys was that they wrote about what mattered: cars, girls and the beach. (I forgot to mention staying in bed all day but Brian Wilson covered that, with "In My Room," anyway.)

Like anyone who cared about rock between 1959 and the Beatles, I was a fairly passionate surf music fan. Not just Brian Wilson's songs, which a lot of people who didn't care much for the genre loved, but even obvious junk like the Rip Chords' "Three Window Coupe." "Pipeline," "Wild Weekend" and "Let's Go Trippin'," the three greatest surf instruments [what about "Wipe Out"?!—*Ed.*] were just as important in the lake country of central Michigan, where you couldn't raise a

three footer with an earthquake, as in San Bernardino. Together with Motown and Chicago soul, girl group singles and the Four Seasons, surf music helped form an aesthetic which still dominates the mid-Atlantic beach scene. Mostly, people stopped trying to make those kinds of records after the British Invasion, when rock got smart, and for surf music, especially, Jimi Hendrix sounded the death knell, with his oft misquoted benediction on *Are You Experienced: May you never hear surf music again.*

Maybe what bothered Hendrix about surf music was that it usually sounded like deranged or incompetent soul music: all Fender Jaguars set at full treble, tenor saxes and rinky dink organs echoplexed to death, drums piped in from down the hall. (The exceptions were the guitarists, especially Carl Wilson, as good a Chuck Berry copyist as Keith Richard in his own way; the Ventures; the original King of Surf Guitar, Dick Dale; and the unknown genius who invented the "Pipeline" riff.) Most of the technically adept surf records came from the East Coast—the Rockin' Rebels did "Wild Weekend" in Philly, the Tradewinds came from Rhode Island, where at least there are some waves—but almost all of the West Coast bands not from Hawthorne, California were strictly garage stylists.

Yet while I can understand the problem Hendrix had, I have always dismissed these failures as immaterial, a problem which the Gods visit on all mortals not blessed with James Jamerson or Duck Dunn's implacable rhythmic sense, and not unlike the accidents of fate and genetics which prevented me from singing in the style of Curtis Mayfield and/or Smokey Robinson, as I dreamed of doing. So why blame the Pyramids.

Today, of course, deranged if not incompetent soul music is very *nouvelle vague,* and thus it is no surprise that from certain corners of the avant garde, surf music rears its pimply head once more. I am not thinking so much of the Surf Punks, who aren't nearly good enough to be in on the joke they think that they're telling, but of groups like the Cramps, whose former guitarist, Bryan Gregory, sounded like he grew up with the Frantics' "Werewolf!" wired to his *medulla oblongata,* and D. Clinton Thompson, Steve Forbert's guitarist, who made a single of the Ventures' "Driving Guitars," back home in Springfield, Missouri.

But perhaps the best thing about surf music, first time around, was that it was the one genre of rock and roll that was almost exclusively instrumental. (The Beach Boys, Jan and Dean and their acolytes came along only toward the end of the trend, and quickly switched the subject back to cars and girls.) I related to this, even though I am not the only human suffering from an unfortunate inability to carry a tune with soul, although it sometimes seems, late in the afternoon when the radio and record player have been rumbling for hours, that I am the last tuneless mortal not to have secured a record deal.

Surf music was stone honky stuff, that is, the first outpost of rock and roll without a legitimate base (or much of one) in rhythm and blues. This is true despite the superficial similarities to soul music, and beyond the fact that one initial response to early surf instrumental hits was surfing albums by both Bo Diddley and Freddie King. Diddley and Freddie continued to sound like themselves, heavier, fatter, less trebly than the surf guitarists. *Surfin' With Bo Diddley* has much more in common with *Bo Diddley Is a Gunslinger* than with anything that the Chantays or Marketts were turning out.

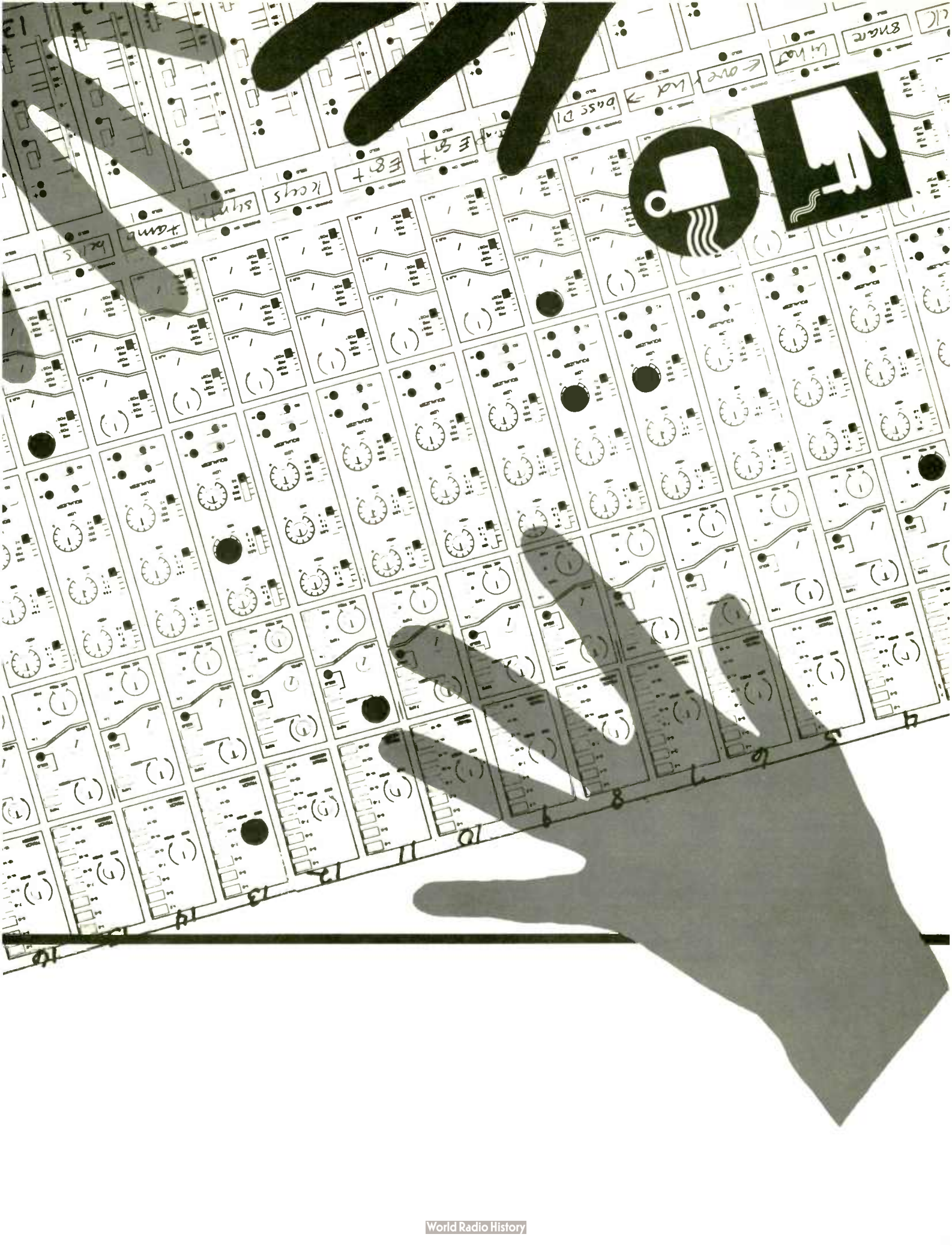
In any event, there were literally hundreds of surf records released between 1961, when Dick Dale kicked off the craze with "Let's Go Trippin'," and 1964-65, when incipient hipness killed it. (This is ironic since The Gamblers' recorded a surf instrumental called "LSD-25" in 1961!) The best of those records (including the Gamblers) are listed in John Blair's *The Illustrated Discography of Surf Music, 1959-1965,* the introduction to which contains the only decent history of the genre I've ever found.

Especially in recent years, the point at which rock diverged absolutely from rhythm and blues and began to develop along its own (often parallel) course has begun to fascinate me, not only in the sense of "where did we go wrong?" but also because it seems clear that even without *Sgt. Pepper's* (or maybe *Pet Sounds*), this divergence was inevitable. In England, for instance, the first non-R&B based band to make it was the Who (despite their early, Shel Talmy produced material, Roger Daltrey demonstrates conclusively on the James Brown songs on the first Who album that he is in no way an R&B vocalist), and it is no accident that the Who (particularly Keith Moon and Pete Townshend) were fanatic surf devotees. Indeed, if you listen to Jack Nitzsche's pop-surf hit "The Lonely Surfer," you will not only hear Townshend-style guitar soloing but also a bleating trumpet that is the direct antecedent of John Entwistle's horn arrangements for *The Who Sell Out,* and subsequent albums. And "Lonely Surfer" came out in 1963!

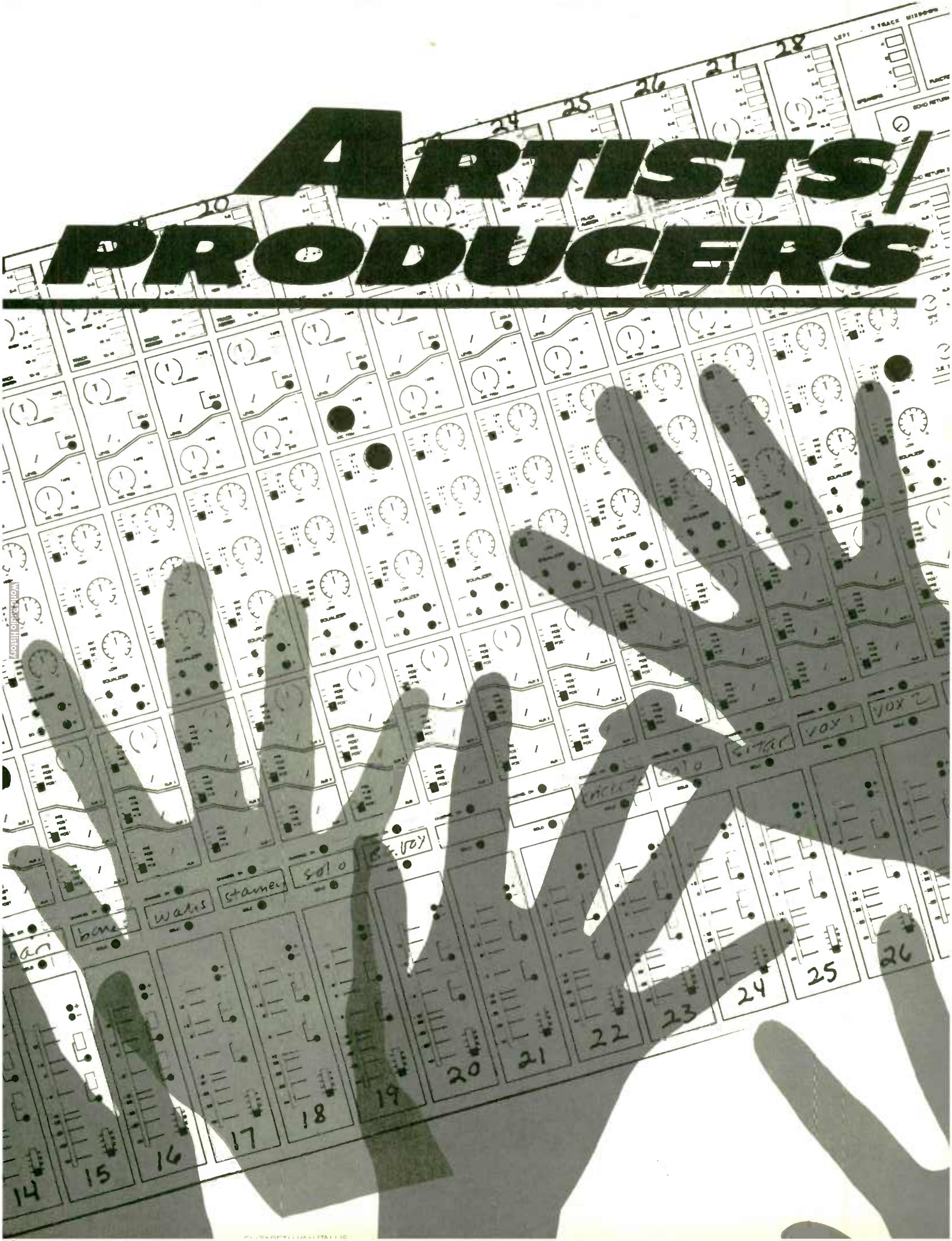
Blair says that the surfbands had their roots in Johnny and the Hurricanes, Link Wray (also Pete Townshend's inspiration), Freddie King and Duane Eddy. That's probably accurate enough, especially for the West Coast instrumental band which preceded the Beach Boys et al., and form the bulk of the surf repertoire; but it's also possible that from 1963 onwards (the period when most people outside the Coast first heard much surf music), the Chicano groups of East L.A. were as great an influence.

When I first became semi-obsessed with surf music, last spring, my friend Ralph Schuckett, the pianist, dug up an album called *Golden Treasures Volume One: West Coast East Side Revue* (Rampart 3303). This is mostly an album of pachuco soul, the light of which is an uncut version of Cannibal and the Headhunters' "Land of 1000 Dances." But what's more interesting are the bands like Ronnie and the Pomona Casuals, Mark and the Escorts and The Blendells, who sound like nothing so much as surf bands with vocalists. According to Schuckett, the Pomona Casuals, among others, often played for surf audiences, but whichever way the influence went, surf music was obviously not so highly homogenized and bleached as the Beach Boys (for all their glories) made it seem. Certainly, a great many surf instrumentals show a heavy Latin tinge (reflected even in titles like "K-39," which refers to a hot spot on the Mexican coast, and "Latinia").

None of this has much to do with surf music's appeal, of course, or the curious fact that when it did explode nationally the music apparently sold much better away from the West Coast. Maybe adding lyrics was the downfall of surf music, not an improvement. (Dick Dale never changed.) Certainly, almost all of Brian Wilson's teen scene lyrics about cars and girls and high school are much more credible, even to a Midwesterner, than his surf lyrics which are mostly forced ("Surfin'," "Surfin' Safari") or simply silly ("Surfers' Rule" degenerates into an attack on the Four Seasons). In fact, Brian wrote only three great surf songs: "Surfin' USA," which he stole from Chuck Berry, altering nothing in the music and only the place names in the text; "Hawaii," which is as much an adolescent Gauguin daydream as anything; and his last true surf song, "Don't Back Down," which simply lays out one of the most brutal Sixties codes of ethics I've ever heard. I've moved back to the city from the shore since the cold weather set in, but "Don't Back Down" remain the words I try to live by. In defiance even of Jimi Hendrix. The way I figure it, he was probably just pissed off that day because somebody scratched his copy of "Pipeline." No way anybody couldn't like that one.



ARTISTS/ PRODUCERS



Nile Rodgers

By Nelson George

Chic's debut single back in 1977, "Dance, Dance, Dance" was a wonderfully calculated piece of disco marketing. It had funky hand claps and slinky guitar riffs to galvanize black dancers, while its swirling strings and campy cheer of "Yowsah, Yowsah, Yowsah," recalling the dance marathons of yore, captured the gay audience. This still faceless group then followed with "Everybody Dance," a breezy tune highlighted by some inspired R&B interplay between the guitar and bass. Many assumed that these were two lucky session cats given room to jam by an unusually open-minded disco producer, and that Chic itself was the girl singers heard chirping merrily in the foreground. Just another studio band, who'd take their disco dollars and hustle smoothly into the night.

But Chic's first album turned that disco truism on its ear. While vocalist Luci Martin and Alfa Anderson (replacing Norma Jean Wright) would certainly be important to the emerging Chic sound, it was two until then unknown New York musicians, guitarist Nile Rodgers and bassist Bernard Edwards, who were really in charge. Rodgers, an aficionado of one James Marshall Hendrix, and Edwards, an ardent student of the James Brown school of funk, had a vision of sophisticated but danceable pop music. Disco was their vehicle and, like Giorgio Moroder, they have utilized the form well to become influential pop songwriter-producers.

Their Atlantic albums plus two albums with Sister Sledge, Norma Jean's solo album, work with Euro-disco lady Shelia and B. Devotion, and Diana Ross' best-ever solo album, *Diana*, present a carefully stylized, yet eclectic approach, with songs full of quirky time signatures, sparse instrumentation, and idiosyncratic lyrics.

It's no surprise that several of their productions have become instant pop classics. "We Are Family," with Kathie Sledge's testifying vocal, mixes gospel spirit and lengthy disco tracks better than anybody, including Sylvester. Both "He's the Greatest Dancer" for Sister Sledge and their own "Le Freak" have instrumental passages where Rodgers, Edwards, and drummer Tony Thompson glide on the groove with swing of the Basie band's "One O'Clock Jump." "Good Times" is the closest thing we have on the mainland to a Jamaican dub record with Edwards' relentless bass line an inspiration for a host of imitators and one out and out copy (more on it later.)

MUSICIAN: How did Chic come together as a group and become involved with disco music?

RODGERS: When I met Bernard we were playing in the Big Apple Band, backing up a vocal group called New York City, and we later played behind Carol Douglass for about six months. We had also played together in the house band at the Apollo during the early seventies. Now to be honest, we wrote "Dance, Dance, Dance" and "Everybody Dance" purely and simply to get the group established and get a contract. Prior to that we had been a power trio and, with our drummer Tony Thompson, played fusion music and made demos in that style. But we could never get a deal. The labels, even in the days when signing fusion bands was popular, weren't interested in a black fusion band. Unless you had a rep in the industry by playing with a Miles Davis or Chick Corea, you couldn't break through. A young guitar player like Al DiMeola got signed because Return to Forever took him under their wing.

MUSICIAN: So to get through you turned to disco?

RODGERS: Yes, but even though we aimed at capturing a recording deal through dance music we were never really a disco band. All you had to do was listen to our first album and you'd hear very melodic tunes and jazzy instrumentals like "San Paulo." But our image musically has been defined by "Dance," "Freak Out," and "Good Times," music we're extremely proud of, but that in no way is the limit of our capabilities.

MUSICIAN: But isn't it remarkable how influential those records have been? The musical approach, with the guitar mixed upfront, Bernard's precise articulation on bass, and the spacious, uncluttered sound have become prototypes for so much that has followed.

RODGERS: It's flattering in a way to hear so many records that were obviously influenced by our playing style and approach to production. It reminds me of when I used to check out Sly at the Filmore East and Larry Graham would be plucking his strings. The next thing you knew everyone was copping his licks. Same thing when Earth, Wind & Fire released "Can't Hide Love." Soon as that came out, other ballads with the same changes and horn lines appeared. So we're in good company. But then as every-

one adopts your techniques, it's easy to suddenly sound old fashioned.

MUSICIAN: I just have to ask you what you thought of the Sugar Hill Gang record. (Three New Jersey rapping deejays had one of 1979's biggest singles with "Rapper's Delight" whose rhythm track was a note-for-note cop of "Good Times").

RODGERS: Well, I first heard it at some club over on the East Side and thought it was really boss, cause I figured it was something being distributed among deejays and not for sale. But then I heard it on the radio and said: cute's cute, but goddamn! We called their company up, said this was wrong, and they admitted it just like that. So we settled out of court and Bernard and I are now listed as writers. It took us too long to get that groove together for us to let that go by. Still we're proud. If you combine the sales of the single "Good Times" and "Rapper's Delight" you have the biggest selling single of all time.

MUSICIAN: Aside from "Good Times" on the *Risque* album, your group's music and other productions have gone away from the obvious disco sound. Hasn't this produced a split on your audience between the young dancers and a more musically sophisticated crowd you seem to be reaching for?

RODGERS: Yes, particularly when we perform live we can detect a split in the audience. For example, to get the full impact of "Savoir Faire" off our second album I have to play a guitar solo that goes on for eight minutes. It's more or less when I go for myself. I need to play: I need to jam. At the same time I don't want to alienate the audience. In New York, San Francisco, and some other cities the reception has been good. In others we never know what the reaction will be. I'll tell you one thing; I had to do that Shelia B album. Even if it doesn't make a dime, I'll be satisfied with it. I'm almost 30 years old and it was the first time I had really got down on record.

MUSICIAN: Obviously, you'd like to stretch out into a more rock oriented format. Have you considered recording a solo album? You have the clout in the industry now to pull it off.

RODGERS: I've thought about it, especially after hearing the Pete Townshend solo album. But because of the politics of the music business I'm afraid it wouldn't come off as I would like it. I have been identified with disco music, so even if I did a classical album it would be marketed as a disco or dance record. I just feel that in that respect my hands are tied.

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A good example is the single "Spacer" off the Shelia and B. Devotion album. In Europe it was a number one record and accepted as a danceable piece of music with rock guitar. Here it could never break out. Yet the difference between it and Donna Summer's "Hot Stuff" were very minor. But then Donna has escaped categories and is now accepted in every format.

That was what I liked about disco music. It was faceless, colorless, classless music. Everybody was welcome from the Bee Gees to Donna Summer to Earth, Wind & Fire. As long as you could dance to it, it was fine. But this "Disco Sucks" and other attempts to squash it have only led to further stratification of music, a very negative factor.

MUSICIAN: Maybe this is a result of your sound being built around rhythm instruments, but I notice an unusual percussive feel to your melodic structures.

RODGERS: Yea, we discovered this by accident. "Upside Down," from the Diana Ross album, is a perfect example. We move through one full progression to the hook and then we superimpose another hook. It's B section over A section. Hook from hook to different section. It immediately strikes the ear as something different, because it's rarely been used before. Also on that album we have a tune called "Friends" that is 6/8 which has no traditional hook. It is more in line with the kind of jazzy material we wrote prior to "Dance, Dance, Dance." We also try to reinforce the rhythm parts. For example we usually use two keyboard players, Ray Jones and Andy Schwartz, and very often we have my guitar and Ray or Andy's keyboard part double each other. We want that groove to be solid and hit like a hard fist.

MUSICIAN: Let's close this by talking about your lyrics. Like many groups coming out of disco, some of your songs have been heavily criticized. But I don't think it takes in the totality of your music.

RODGERS: I notice that critics and others don't credit black people with the ability to write ingenious, creative lyrics. Not every song we do is about nightclubbing or dancing. Most of our songs on the *Risque* are about different kinds of love affairs with a twist to each. On the *Real People* album we deal a little with the anger and hostility we've felt since we became successful. We don't include those lyric sheets for show. I think we have some interesting things to say.

BRIAN ENO

By Mikal Gilmore and Spottswood Erving

I'm such a lucky person. I don't know how, but everything happens to me just as I want it to. What's funny is I don't even *believe* that some people have a benevolent destiny that keeps endowing them with little gifts. Yet here I am, sort of contradictory proof of that very thing."

For Brian Eno, one such little gift was the opportunity to produce a once in a lifetime record, Talking Heads' *Remain In Light*. His third production effort for the band, and the first in which he asserted his standing as a full-fledged group member, *Remain In Light* took the band way beyond the conventions (relatively speaking) of their earlier rock records: its provocative blend of dense dance rhythms and mazy vocal webs established it overnight as the first convincing fusion of New Wave ambition and African sensibility.

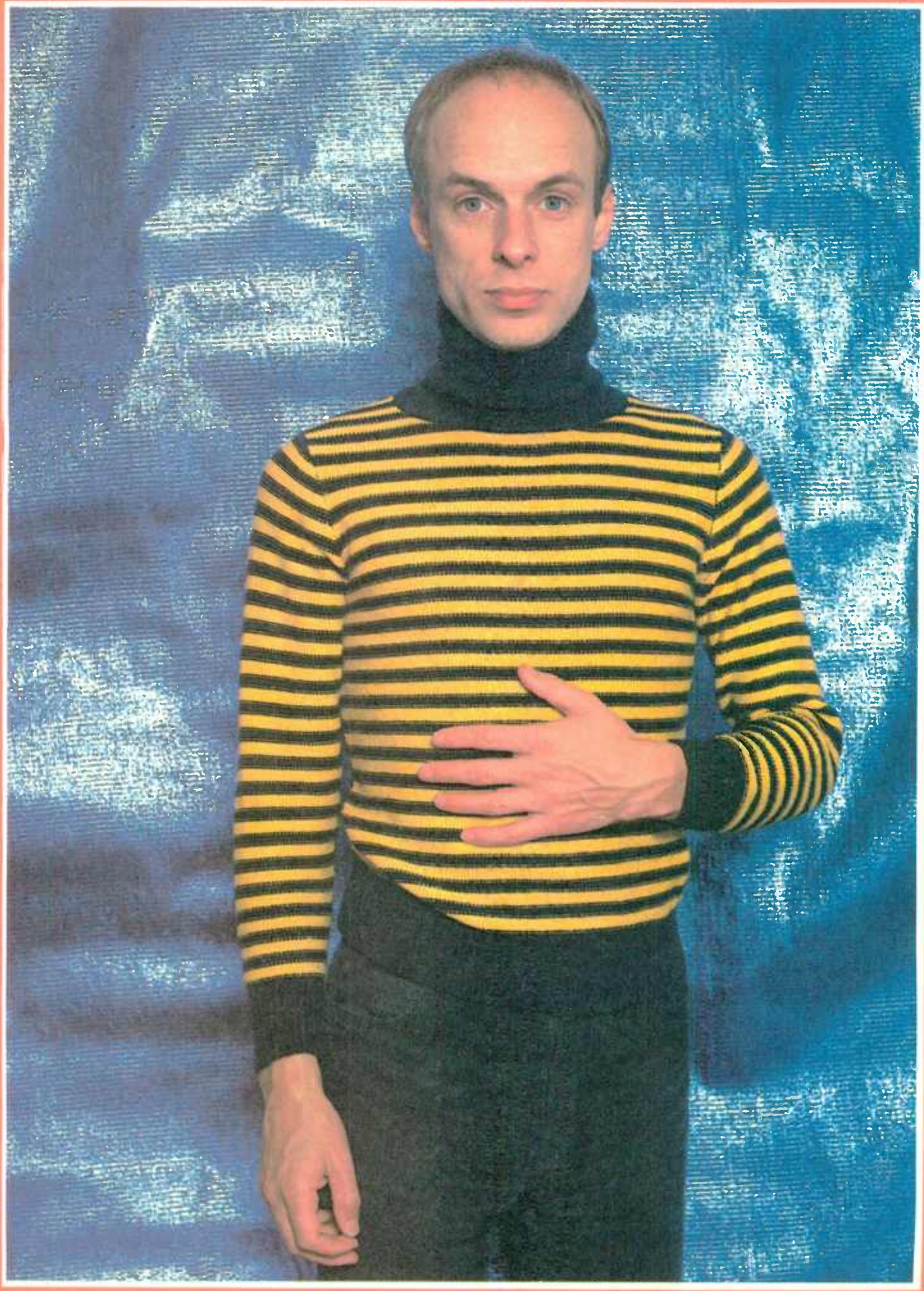
Another little gift came in the unlikely form of a legal setback. The estate of one Kathryn Kuhlman, recently deceased evangelist, denied Eno and David Byrne permission to use her voice — which Byrne had taped off the radio — among the other "found" voices on their then-completed collaboration, *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. Their ghastly sacrilege thus nipped in the bud, Eno and Byrne went back and reworked that track, and then figured they'd fiddle with another, and then another, and so on...until the album, according to Eno, was vastly improved. Serendipitous revisionism never had it so good: *Bush Of Ghosts* turns out to be a richly rhythmic amalgam of art-rock, punk-funk, found vocals, and eerie electronics — all in all, a disquieting montage of modernism and primitivism unlike anything previously produced by popular artists.

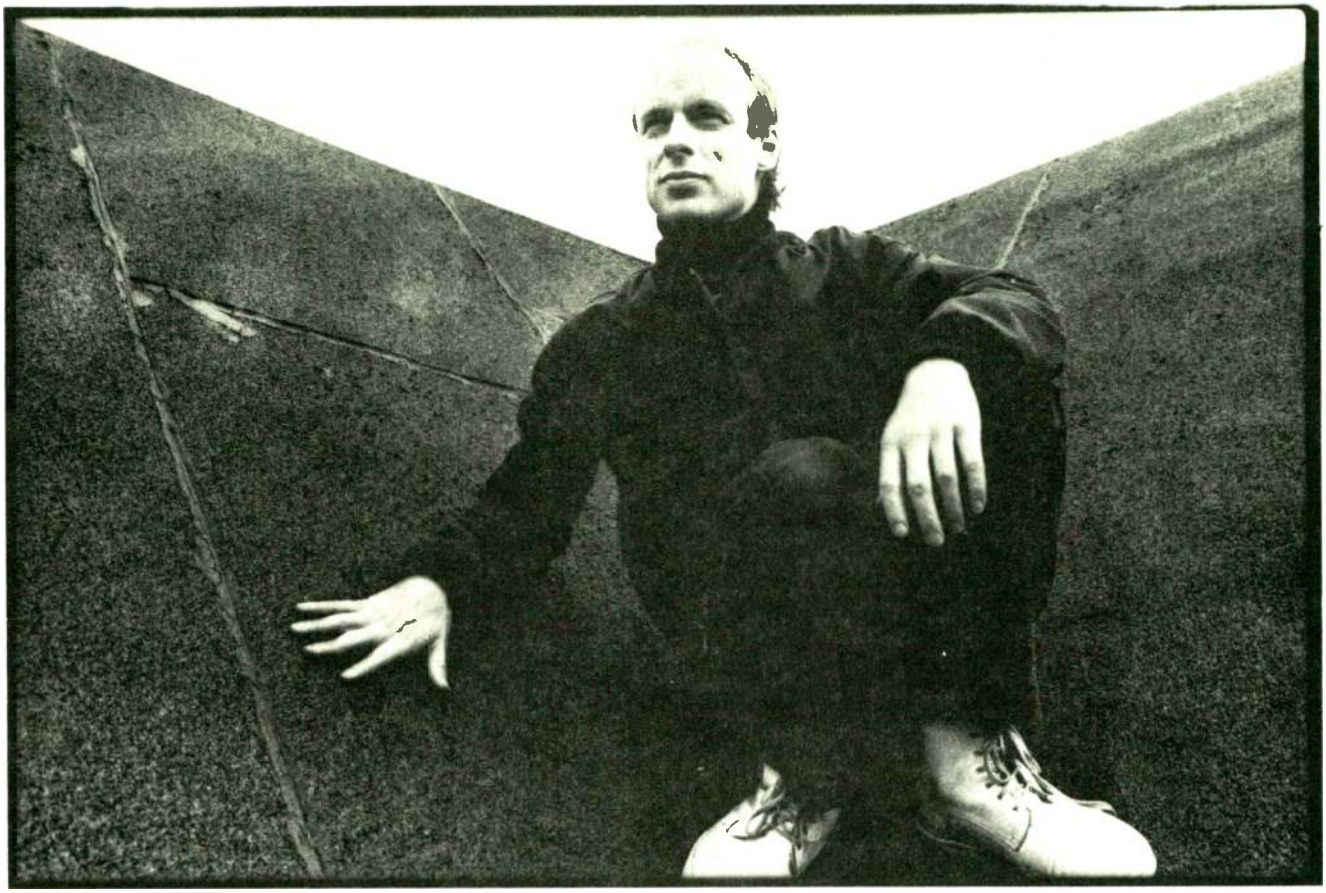
Yet a third gift — hardly little, this one — came by way of a United Nations emissary. He brought Eno an invitation from Ghana's Ministry of Culture asking him to attend their art festival and linger for a while if he liked, possibly record with some Ghanian musicians. He went, he listened, he produced an album for a local group, he played with them, he recorded: Eno in an Afro-musicologist's heaven.

"I had this idea," Eno said, "that it would be exciting to introduce African — and particularly Ghanian music — to Western Culture in a big way. And I don't mean as a novelty form, but as a way of asserting that this is incredibly stimulating music, that it stands in comparison with *anything* happening here. Well somehow the Ghanians caught wind of my aspirations and thought it a worthy idea to invite me over. I'm also quite interested in Arabic music, but it's a little harder to come to terms with, partly because that North African melodic sense is very different than ours.

"You see, I've developed this strong feeling about what's happening to so-called 'primitive' and ethnic tribal peoples. I believe that the complexity of their music stands as a symbol of the richness of their societies, and I hope that people, upon listening to this music, might think that if these cultures can produce music this intricate and this intelligent, then they can't really be 'primitive.'"

In a sense, the aesthetic precepts that Eno is working from bear similarity to the musical idealism that guides the Clash in *Sandinista!*, and the untutored iconoclasm that serves Public Image Ltd. in *Flowers Of Romance*: they all seek to expand the vernacular of Western popular music — and perhaps deepen the possibilities of life itself — by melding traditional rock forms with remote cultural modes. In Eno's case though, there are few bridges to burn: "I tried to maintain an enthusiasm for punk, but there just isn't much happening there in the way of ideas. Finally, I realized, Goddamn!, there's a whole *world* of interesting music out there. Why bother about this little scene right here? So what if punk dies off? There's stuff going on in South Africa





DEBORAH FEINGOLD

now that's infinitely more interesting, and rewarding."

MUSICIAN: First things first, how was your month in Ghana?

ENO: I was quite impressed by the friendliness of the people and by their dancing, the way even the old people danced. But the most thrilling thing actually sounds quite unthrilling: I often sat outside Accra in the evening with my little Sony stereo recorder and my headphones and just listened to whatever was going on. Since there wasn't much traffic, I could hear sounds it would ordinarily mask: insect sounds, people in the distance, night birds, various kinds of frogs, and all sorts of distant drumming from all different angles—from very, very far away the drums would drift in and drift out as the wind changed. I spent a great deal of time just listening to the environment, that was the thrill of going to Africa for me. For me, those tapes are a more accurate record than any kind of photograph would be.

MUSICIAN: Might you use those tapes as part of the project you began recording with Ghanaian musicians?

ENO: Perhaps, but I can't work on top of them because those tapes are thick with subtlety and sometimes very faint. I might, however, use them in conjunction with a video project like the one I constructed in San Francisco awhile back; I shot large buildings, office buildings with no people in the frame and dubbed onto the tape *A Sounds of a Cameroon Village* Folkways record. The contrast was really fascinating: totalitarian buildings, no humans, and a soundtrack of people talking and working and goats and chickens clucking!

MUSICIAN: Speaking of dubbing "found" aural materials, which of course is an integral part of *Bush Of Ghosts*, I'm curious as to what precedents influenced your use of that technique?

ENO: Oh yeah, that's important, because we wouldn't want anyone to think this was our original idea. Holger Czukay's *Movies* used the same technique a few years ago, and both he and I got the idea from Stockhausen, who was using the technique fifteen years ago. I would also point to "I Am The Walrus," which nicely uses found vocals, and the most crucial ones for me were by Steve Reich. He did some records in the mid-'60s, first *Come Out* and then *It's Gonna Rain*, which were wholly composed of found voices. No instruments, just voices. This was extremely important for me. I don't claim originality, but I do hope other people use found materials in the future instead of writing cruddy songs like they do now.

MUSICIAN: You once said that your "dream group" would sound something like a coalition of Parliament and Kraftwerk. It seems that the two new records shoot for that ideal?

ENO: Actually, my ideal group is getting bigger all the time. If I were to respond to that question now, I would add into the equation Ladysmith Black Mambazo [a South African acapella group], Abou Abdel Said [an Arabic Farfisa player], and a much larger rhythm section. Lately, I've been trying to write songs that have strong rhythmic undercurrents, but also very complex vocal overlayers—sort of a merger of the West African talking-drums style and the South African part-singing tradition. On certain tracks of *Remain In Light*—such as "The Great Curve," which has about four or five interlocking vocal lines that I wrote—you get a sense of that fusion beginning to happen.

MUSICIAN: There's very little music on any of your previous records that could prepare us for *Bush Of Ghosts* and *Remain In Light*. When did your interest in African music begin?

ENO: I first became aware of it about 1972, through a record by Fela Ransome [presently known as Fela Anikulapo-Kuti], but it didn't occur to me that there was any way of joining my interest with African music. Partly, that's because at the time—this was just after I'd left Roxy Music—I was going through a phase where I was mostly interested in working by myself, and African music is nothing if not social music.

In time, I found myself drawing closer to that vision of communal creativity. In fact, I've become pretty bored with working on my own. The types of interactions I'm after occur when there are certain misinterpretations of an idea among a number of

people. For example, you have six or seven musicians working on a single piece, yet each one approaches it from a slightly different angle. As a result, you get a useful collision of views: one person decides to push a beat in a different way from somebody else, and an interesting tension comes of that.

MUSICIAN: What you're describing sounds a lot like jazz improvisation.

ENO: No, not really. It isn't related to the idea of the improviser being given his freedom while the rest of the band holds the threads of the piece together. The pinnacle of that view of freedom, of course, is avant-garde jazz, which I find by and large a dead loss. It operates on the assumption that if you remove all constraints from people, they will behave in some especially inspired manner. This doesn't seem to me to be true in any sense at all—not socially, and certainly not artistically.

The point is that the typical jazz or even rock concept of improvisation is based on the theory of the individual breaking loose of something. The African version is based on the idea of the individual making an important, timely contribution to a *social* event. Talking Heads is an ideal example of that kind of communion; their whole style involves sociorhythmic interconnectedness.

MUSICIAN: Which makes *Bush Of Ghosts* radically different than *Remain In Light*; it seems more like an act of collage than a work of communion.

ENO: Well, there was a lot of influence from one to the other. I started some basic tracks for *Bush Of Ghosts* nearly two years ago, and then in January of 1980 I invited David into the project as a full collaborator. We finished one version of the record, then went into the studio with the Talking Heads with the feeling that we wanted to expand some of the same ideas we'd been working on. For instance, "Once in a Lifetime" has David's preacher rap on it, which is very similar to some of the evangelist rants on *Bush Of Ghosts*. More explicitly, what we were interested in promoting was this idea of interchange between what we knew of American music and what we *understood* about African music, which we don't claim to be a comprehensive or even accurate understanding.

As it turned out, *Remain In Light* succeeded in a number of places where *Bush Of Ghosts* had failed. So I suggested to David that we shouldn't release our project until we had rethought it a bit. Initially, he wasn't very keen on that idea, but then the Kathryne Kuhlman episode came up, and we were forced into a position where we might have to scrap the album. Actually, I was pretty pleased by that, because it meant we had to work at least on that one track, and if it meant that, then there would be no harm in doing a few other things as well. Since then we've changed quite a lot of it, and it has become a much better articulation of our original design.

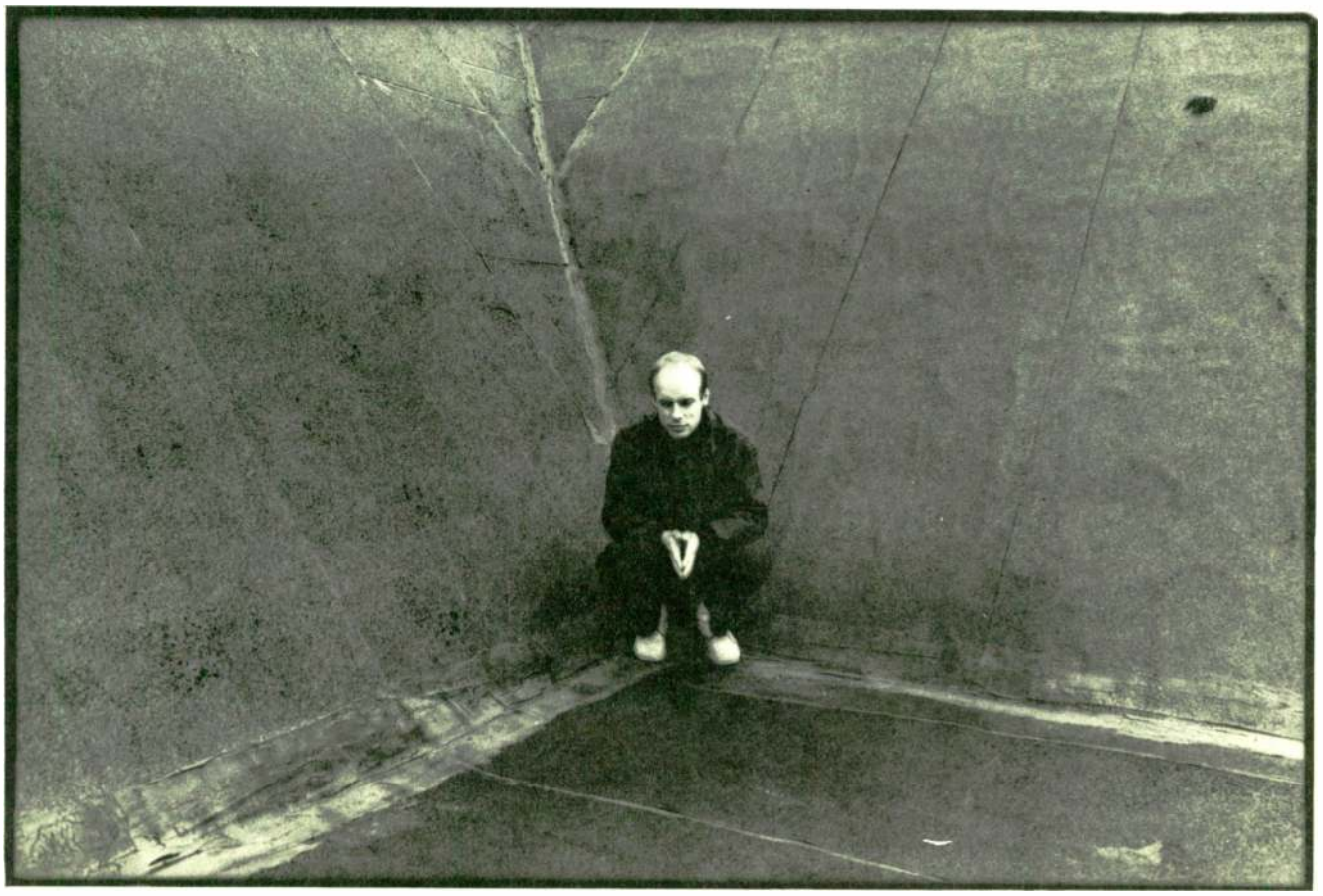
MUSICIAN: How extensive was your role in the Talking Heads record?

ENO: I explained to everybody before we began the record that I wasn't going to produce this one in the normal sense. In fact, originally I didn't want to produce it at all. I told the group that the only way I cared to work these days was collaboratively, and that on top of that, I had a very strong idea about the direction I wanted their music to go in.

I don't mean to give the impression that the Talking Heads were sitting around without ideas of their own, nor that I was exactly imposing mine on top of theirs. This was a direction they were headed in anyway, though perhaps they hadn't articulated it to any great extent. We all share the belief that music should have something to do with exploring ideas.

Anyway, I *did* take a very dominant hand on this record, though there are places where I did almost nothing. My policy as a producer and collaborator has always been that you should do what's necessary for the musical event at hand, and if the necessary thing is to leave it alone, then you do that. That's what I expect of musicians as well.

MUSICIAN: Yet another view of your role in the Talking



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Heads—and even some of the group members themselves have expressed this—is that you and Byrne have more or less taken over the band for your own ends.

ENO: That's a statement I would like to guard against. Let me tell you something that might help in that regard. After we had finished *Remain In Light*, I called a meeting of the Talking Heads to decide how we were going to divide royalties. Traditionally, a song consists of lyrics, melody and arrangement, with royalties being divided a third each. But that didn't reflect the reality of this record, so a continuation of my producer's role was to formulate a list of what I considered the factors in making it.

One factor, obviously, was melody, and another lyrics. A third element was the project's conceptual direction—which is to say that the choices people made musically weren't based on preference or whim, but upon fulfilling that African objective I mentioned earlier. A fourth one was who originated specific musical ideas. When we were standing out there in the studio playing, someone would come up with an idea which might be incredibly simple, yet for some reason would trigger everyone else off. In some cases, that idea never appeared in the final piece, but since it was the anchor upon which the music was moored, you have to give credit for it. The final factor is who constructed the situation in which this could happen. Clearly, in the case of the Talking Heads this was a group thing. The fact that all the band members—and not just me and David—were emotionally and conceptually and aesthetically *ready* for that music at that time, and were not only prepared to let it happen but to actively engage in it, is probably the single most important factor.

There seems to be a simplistic view at work about the Talking Heads, which is that David Byrne and Brian Eno are the directors of the group's ideas, and that they even produced a record beforehand that had several of *Remain In Light*'s ideas on it. To offset that, I'm saying these other creative considerations are equally important. The fact that *Remain In Light* came out sounding the way it did—rather than the way *Bush Of Ghosts* sounds—is because it was the Talking Heads who made that record.

MUSICIAN: The kinetic rhythmic density of *Bush Of Ghosts* is quite a departure from the placid, impressionist style of music that characterizes so much of your recent work, like *Music For Airports* and *The Plateaux Of Mirror* [the latter with pianist Harold Budd]. Yet that music was also originally an act of deviation, an about-face from the avant-pop inroads you had made with Roxy Music and your early solo albums. You seem to have fluctuated between extremist, seemingly incongruous musical modes.

ENO: What I've tried to do, it seems, is to explore territory that either hasn't been explored or wasn't being explored at the time of a particular project of mine. You see, there's been this whole aesthetic on the rise in rock & roll—which in fact mirrors the avant-garde art movement of the '60s—that places greatest import on the artist shocking his audience into some new kind of recognition. The whole idea is based on a methodology of horror—like the work of Hermann Nietsch, that artist who slaughters animals—and it just doesn't work. Anybody who attends an extremist performance by an avant-garde artist has already tacitly accepted the artist's premise. Likewise, we all know what we can expect from bands whose aesthetic is derived from aggression and violence—the shock methodology—and this too no longer seems original or engaging. In fact, in this context the only really shocking things are delicacy and beauty.

What I'm saying is, the realities of life aren't only harsh. Some realities are beautiful, and choosing to concentrate on them shouldn't be regarded as a mortal sin. One of art's functions is to present you with the possibility of a more desirable reality. Now some people may regard that as an escapist stance, and, indeed, maybe it is. I *can't* deal with the world in a lot of respects, so I want to study other possible worlds. I need to find what it is I want in a world and see if I can move this one towards that. One way I do that is creating, through music, a simulacrum of the world I want.

MUSICIAN: Yet you produced the *No New York* collection, which featured music by some of the most artfully nihilistic and abrasive New Wave bands to date. In fact, you're widely regarded as one of the principal movers and shakers behind the whole punk and post-punk movement.

ENO: I don't claim any special role in generating New Wave. It just happened to be a movement of people giving special emphasis to musical values I once had an interest in—although people well before me, like the Velvet Underground, had already focused on the same ideas. When the punk revolution happened—and these ideas received new attention and were recombined in new ways—it still wasn't too much a revelation for me.

However, one influence I think I had in New Wave—and I'm quite pleased about it—is that I was one of the people who popularized the notion that music isn't only the province of musicians. When I first started making records, there was this whole accent in rock & roll on heroic instrumentalists who could play quickly, skillfully and technically. I thought then, and still think, that isn't what music is really about. I was a non-musician at the time—I couldn't play anything—and I wanted to make the point that, just as one doesn't have to be an accomplished realist to make valid art, one doesn't have to be an adept instrumentalist to make effective music. In fact, it's what I would describe as a painterly style of music, because the musician uses the instruments as a paint brush and the studio as a canvas.

MUSICIAN: And how does this idea or ideal translate into the actual making of music?

ENO: I always work directly onto tape. Usually I'll be doing something like plugging a rhythm box into an echo channel, and as I'm turning knobs and fiddling with possibilities I'll hit a point where something fairly unique starts to happen, like a complex rhythmic construction. From there, I start to pile things up on tape, and try to figure where the net result is leading to. This is a fairly empirical way of working, in which *form* is the guiding concept.

Another method—and this is the one that characterizes nearly all of my Ambient projects—is first to conceive a structural proposition. In *Discreet Music* for example, there are two concurrent melodic cycles at work, but each lasts for a different length of time. Of course, since they're different lengths, the cycles always overlay in different ways. So what was important was to construct two different melodies that were not only compatible, but compatible at every possible collision point. In this method, *system* is the guiding principle, and in fact, dictates form.

MUSICIAN: Into what kind of territories do you see exploring in the immediate future?

ENO: Well I'm pretty sick of rock music, pretty sick of anything that's in that sphere. The thing is, I love playing it—I find it thrilling to make, but I know once I make it I'm never going to listen to it again.

What I'm working on now, since Ghana, is landscape music, imaginary landscapes. I want to construct, in music, a geology and then a geography and then a landscape that sits on top of it. And then I want to populate these places with creatures, some of which might be, eventually, human.

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IN SEARCH OF THE GRATEFU

By Vic Garbarini

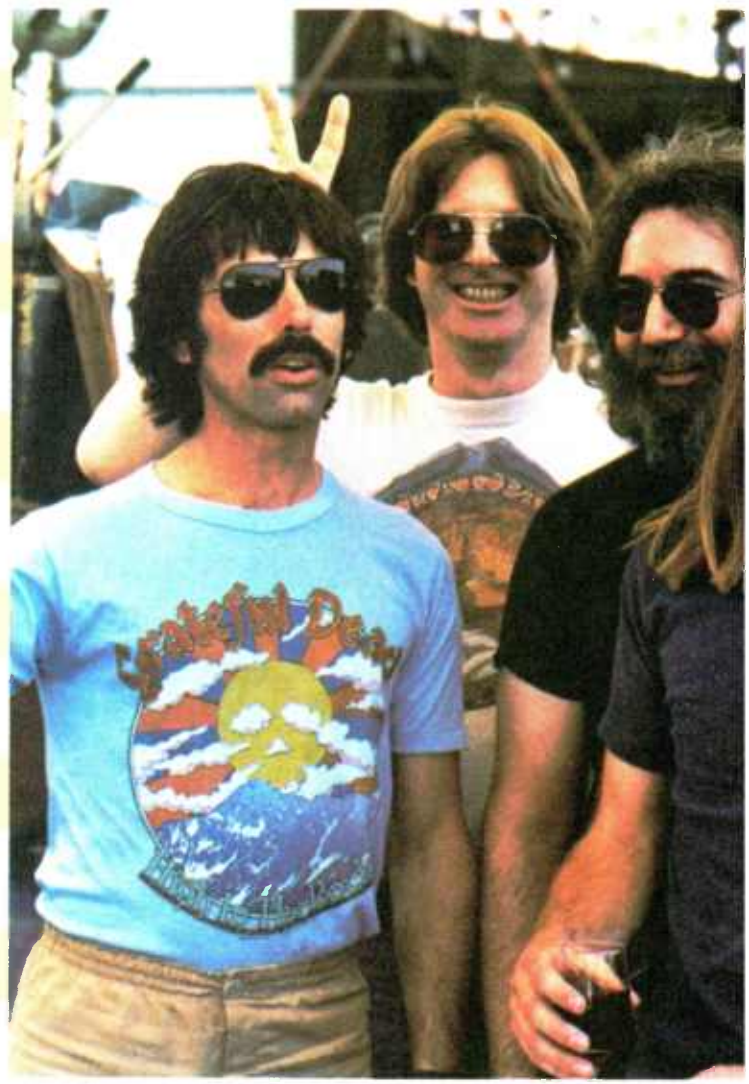
He's a 35-year-old happily married father of four — the respected director of a research institute in Washington, D.C. But Jerry Toporovsky has a secret obsession, and on this cool All Hallows Eve he's about to drive six long hours to New York's Radio City Music Hall to indulge it. "Sometimes I try to reason with myself," explains Toporovsky. "I'm pushing 40, I've got a family and a full-time job — I've gotta be *crazy* to be doing this. But then I think of the last time I saw them and realize it's going to be worth it. It always is." Yes, friends, it's sad but true: Jerry Toporovsky is a confirmed Deadhead.

There is no known cure.

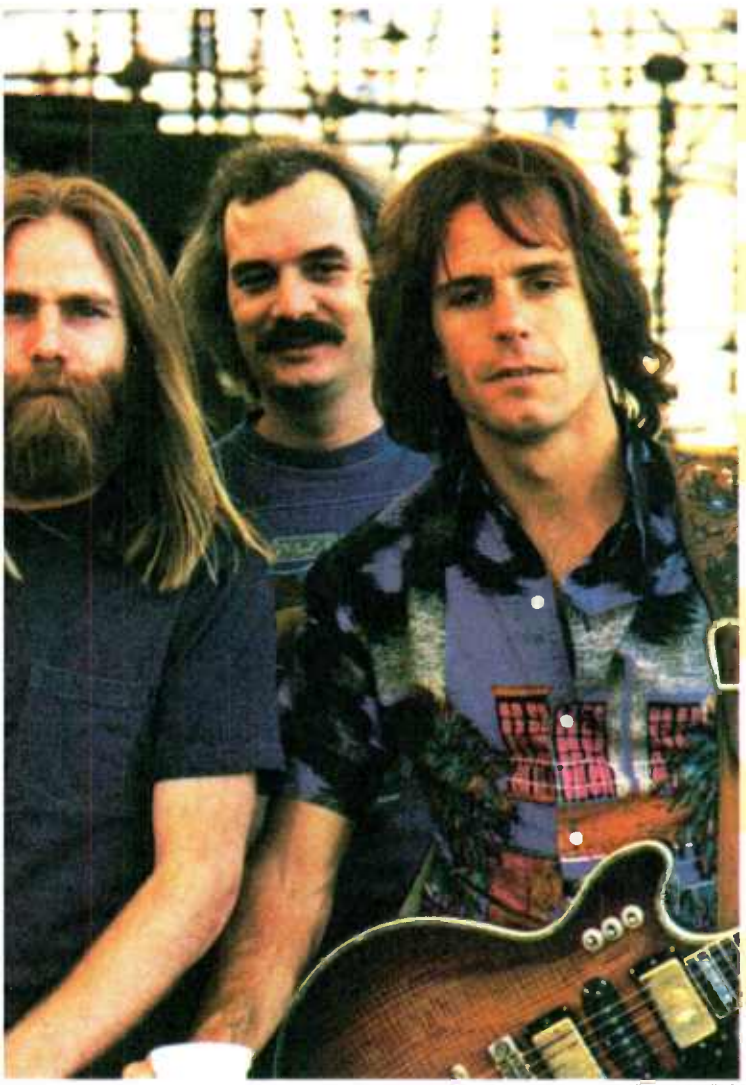
There are thousands like him who follow the Grateful Dead's moveable feast around the country like medieval pilgrims pursuing some mobile Canterbury. They range in age from 16 to 60, and some have been "on the bus," as Ken Kesey might put it, since the band's inception over fifteen years ago. What is it that attracts them? Certainly not nostalgia. The Grateful Dead are *not* the Beach Boys — a traveling oldie show cranking out sentimental favorites for aging hippies. No, the Dead are a living, evolving phenomenon who are still capable of acting as channels for the special quality of energy that can transform an ordinary concert into a transcendent event. Unfortunately, very little of this magic (what Garcia refers to as their "x chemistry") finds its way onto vinyl, making it difficult for the average un-Deadhead to understand what all the hoopla is about. "There are a few passages on 'Dark Star' and some of the other material from the live albums or old concert tapes that capture that 'otherness,' but they're the exception," explains Toporovsky. "We just don't play with the same fire in the studio," concurs guitarist Bob Weir. "We've even toyed with the idea of taking the time off from touring to learn how to make records in the studio; desperation being the mother of invention, we'd have to come up with something!"

Well, maybe.

True, *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* came close, but those were albums of simpler, more concise material that sidestepped the real problem of how to deal with the more free-form exploration of a "Dark Star" or "Saint Stephen." It's not simply a question of capturing the spirit of the jam; there's another dimension that emerges when the Dead



JL DEAD



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walk into their free-wheeling improvisation, a quality that seems impossible to recreate in the studio. "It's not just a question of jamming — it's a little bit like jazz, but that's not it either," says Toporovsky. "It's a question of really connecting on a higher level with each other." Since a principal difference between the Dead live and the Dead in the studio involves the presence of an audience, it would follow that interacting with said audience is an indispensable part of the Grateful Dead experience. "Sure, we can get that magic on a record," laughs drummer Bill Kreutzman, "just cram about 5000 people in a studio with us while we record!"

Considering the band's early involvement with psychedelics, some have claimed that this "x chemistry" is entirely dependent on drugs. "Not true," argues Toporovsky. "Acid can give you a headstart in getting to that 'other' place, but it's not required in order to plug into the experience. I haven't taken psychedelics in over five years but I still get the same high at a Dead concert now without drugs as I did on acid in the beginning." In addition to having an audience to work with, the other indispensable factor in the Grateful Dead equation is their commitment to taking risks. Not just propositional and conceptual risks, but a willingness to step out over the edge every night in concert.

"That spirit of adventure is crucial," claims Weir. "We're dedicated to pushing everything a little further each time. Every time another verse comes up, even if I've played it a thousand times before, I try to play it a little differently, to understand and make it a little better each time...and then when we're *really* loosened up, we go for something we've *never* played before." In short, nothing is allowed to ossify into a predictable pattern — everything is kept alive, fresh, and evolving: the Rolling Stones may be content to gather moss, but not the Dead. They have firmly grasped the idea that the only way to maintain their connection with the ineffable is through constant growth and change.

As the band's newest member, keyboardist Brent Mydland discovered just before his first Dead concert two years ago, living with the unexpected can be a bit disorienting at first. "The day before the concert I asked what tunes we'd be doing, so I could concentrate on those songs, but no one would tell me. It freaked me a bit, but then when we got on stage, I

realized that *nobody* knew what we were going to play. Keeps you on your toes. . ." Once into those swirling, birth-of-the-universe jams, almost anything goes; even long forgotten songs may emerge from the maelstrom like time travelers popping out of a black hole: " 'Cold Rain and Snow' just reappeared after six years in the middle of a jam 'cause Garcia realized he could superimpose it over what we were doing," reflects Weir. Band members encourage each other to step out at any point; if somebody states a theme emphatically enough, the rest will inevitably follow. "Well, *almost* always," corrects Weir. "Sometimes only *half* the guys will come along—but that's rare." Of course, the same is true of the mysterious "X factor;" "We can prepare ourselves to be proper vehicles for it, but we can't guarantee it'll happen on any given night," explains the Dead's other drummer, Mickey Hart. "We can raise the sail, but we can't make the wind come." Toporovsky agrees: "Out of any five given concerts, one will be mediocre, one or two will be very, very good, and one or two will be utterly incredible." In the old days the dead would often come into an area for a sustained engagement of half-a-dozen shows, guaranteeing compulsive Deadheads at least one or two transcendent performances. Today, engagements are generally limited to two or three per city, and the faithful often have to catch the band in at least two different towns to secure their cosmic hit.

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But the amazing thing is that those moments *do* happen. In the course of interviewing all the band members (except Phil Lesh, who wasn't available), I tried to get them to articulate what they'd discovered about the principles that sustained this matrix, that kept the cosmic dance between performer, audience, and the music itself from collapsing into a chaotic jumble. This was more than a matter of mere curiosity on my part; the problem of longevity is one that must haunt every band as their youthful passion and energy wanes. Any group that's been around for 15 years and can still call down that illuminative power has something to teach all of us. Maybe something that could even save somebody's life. I can't help but think of a Bruce Springsteen concert a few weeks back. The magic just wasn't happening during the first set, and Bruce knew it. But being Bruce, he insisted on pushing himself and his band with a harsh urgency bordering on desperation, as if he hoped to break through to the other side on sheer bravado alone. It hurt to watch him struggle like some beached swimmer, who thinks he can bring back an ebbing tide if he just continues to flail away hard enough on the sand. "My God," said a voice in the next aisle, "if he keeps that up, he'll kill himself." It was a frightening thought, and one that came back to haunt me the other day when I heard that Springsteen had cancelled a series of midwestern dates on account of exhaustion.

After a decade and a half of experimentation, the Dead are convinced that sheer force alone isn't the answer. "It is not even a question of concentration," insists Weir. "You've got to let go and surrender to it; drop your cares, and be there for it." Okay, but who calls the shots? "Nobody calls the shots," counters Weir. "The Dead is bigger than the sum of its parts," adds Garcia. "We go where it leads us." Sounds simple enough but how the hell do you keep everybody's egos from tearing apart the delicate balance needed to keep things open? According to the Dead, the answer involves standing the normal traditional Western attitude towards music on its head: concentration and individual assertiveness give way to a more diffuse awareness and commitment to ensemble playing. According to Weir, "You have to reverse gears from the way you originally learned things. For a musician to master his instrument requires excruciating concentration; each note has to be conquered, then strung together to form riffs and passages. For ensemble playing you've got to let all that go and be aware of others. The key here is *listening to what everybody else is doing.* You can always tell when somebody's not listening, because they play too much and spoil the chemistry." So you divide your attention between what you're doing and what the group is doing? "No," insists Weir, "that's not it. Dividing your attention implies a separation between yourself and the music where none exists. Actually, I *am* the music and all that's necessary is to maintain a little concentration, just enough to articulate my part so it blends with the whole."

The Dead are guaranteed to constantly confound your expectations: every time you think you've got them pegged they toss you another curve. On their debut album they were cleverly disguised as an electric jug band, progressive-minded, but obviously tied to their blues and folk roots. Then came *Anthem of the Sun* —an about-face if ever there was one. It was an acid-drenched psychedelic garage sale that owed more to Stockhausen and Coltrane than Kweskin or Seeger. Next came *Aoxomoxoa*, a noble if not entirely successful attempt to compress all that weirdness into traditional three-minute segments.

It wasn't until the double *Live Dead* that the record-buying public got a glimpse of what all the excitement was about. Although it remains for many, including most of the band members I polled, the quintessential Dead album, the fact that it's simply a taped concert performance served to highlight the Dead's inability to produce a studio recording that reflected their essential nature. They decided to shift gears once again, this time abandoning their complex improvisational material in favor of simpler musical forms whose spirit might be easier to capture on tape. The resulting albums, *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* are the musical equivalent of the Gothic flying buttress: slender, delicate structures that somehow support a cathedral of sound and feeling. About this time the Dead were presented with a challenge of a different nature, with the death of the lead vocalist and keyboardist, Ron McKernan (alias Pigpen). Mickey Hart remembers: "A lot of people may not realize it now, but Pigpen was the boss in those days; it was his band, he was the leader, not Jerry or Bob. When he died, his responsibili-

ties fell on everybody else's shoulders." It was also a time when rock bands were undergoing fundamental changes in their relationship with their audiences. The sense of communion, of oneness between player and listener was disintegrating as musicians became unreachable superstars, and the audience in turn chose entertainment over communication. Instinctively, the Dead opted out of the whole mad game. They gave up the chance to become superstars, but it didn't matter. They had discovered how to keep that inner dynamic alive within themselves, and there was no way they could commercialize that without crushing its essence. They had something that money couldn't buy (besides, the very thought of Jerry Garcia in a gold lame jumpsuit is too painful to bear).

Compelled by what Garcia refers to as "the call of the weird," the Dead returned to experimental themes on albums like *Blues For Allah* and *Terrapin Station*. The latter album's orchestral sweep, pristine production values, and superb ensemble playing qualify it as probably the most successful attempt yet at a studio rendering of their concert persona. Producer Lowell George brought a taste of funk to *Shakedown Street* and in the process showed the band how to take greater advantage of the rhythmic dynamics inherent in their two-drummer configuration in the studio. Last year's *The Grateful Dead Go To Heaven* was disappointingly tame AOR fare, though Garcia's peppy "Alabama Getaway" was the closest thing they've had to a hit in years.

This summer the Dead have presented us with a double-double dose of what they do best: two double live albums, one acoustic and one electric, both recorded last fall in New York and San Francisco, the twin capitals of Dead-dom. (The band jokingly refers to the N.Y.-Long Island area as "The Grateful Dead Belt".) These releases are being heralded as the "definitive" Dead albums, and on the evidence presented by the acoustic set, which is the only one available now—the electric record should be coming out by the time you read this—that may be a fair assessment. Dan Healy's recording and production are state-of-the-art, and the performances are among the best I've ever heard from the band.

During a break in the interview, I buttonholed Brent Mydland, figuring as the new guy in the band maybe he'll give me some tips on dealing with the Ancient Ones. "I'll tell ya' a funny thing," says Mydland. "When I first joined these guys I had the feeling I was on the outside of a massive inside joke, but I think I'm beginning to catch on." Gee, Brent, can you toss me any clues? "Of course not!" he replies in mock anger. "Are you trying to get me in trouble or something!?"

That's what I like about the Dead: they never preach or proselytize. Instead, they quietly go about constructing a working model of what might be a brave new world, based on openness to change and risk, diffusion of ego, sensitivity to the needs of the moment, and receptivity to higher forces. Rather than mere relics of a mythic past, Garcia and company may yet prove to be touchstones for a viable future.

MUSICIAN: How much improvisational space is built into the longer, more exploratory pieces like "St. Stephen" and "Terrapin Station"?

GARCIA: An awful lot . . . it depends on the piece. "Terrapin" has some sections that are extremely tight, that you could actually describe as being arranged; there are specific notes that each of us has elected to play. The melody, lyrics, and chord changes are set, but the specific licks that anyone wants to play are left open.

MUSICIAN: Would you say that this looseness, this willingness to stay open and take risks is a crucial factor in creating a space for that special energy to enter?

GARCIA: Absolutely! It's even affected the way I write songs. In the past, when I had an idea for a song, I also had an idea for an arrangement. Sinced then I've sort of purged myself of that habit. There's simply no point in working out all those details, because when a song goes into the Dead, it's anybody's guess how it'll come out. So why disappoint myself?

MUSICIAN: Who or what gives the Dead its overall direction, then?

GARCIA: It's been some time since any of us have had specific directional ideas about the band . . . the Grateful Dead is in its own hands now; it makes up its own mind, and we give it its head and let it go where it wants. We've gotten to be kind of con-

MUSICIAN: You guys have probably put out more live albums than anyone I can think of—two double live releases this summer alone. Is the mysterious "x factor" that sometimes transforms a Grateful Dead concert impossible to capture in a studio situation?

GARCIA: I'm not sure if it can or can't be captured in the studio, though I agree that so far *we've* failed to capture it there. But we've never really been set up to perform in the studio. Our idea of performance is what we do live, and making records is more of a concession to the realities of the music business than a real expression of our natural flow. Let's put it this way: if making records was a thing you did as a hobby, it's possible we might have turned to it at one point or another. But I really think live music is where it's at for us.

MUSICIAN: How about playing live in the studio?

GARCIA: Yeah, we've tried that, but it's difficult to do with the type of band set-up we have, especially the technical problem of recording two drummers at once. We can't baffle or isolate them; they have to be together, they have to communicate. So live in the studio the microphone hears them as one big drum set, and that's not something you can straighten out in the mix.

MUSICIAN: But isn't there also a psychological reason having to do with the role of the audience?

GARCIA: Very definitely. But that's something we have to talk around; We can't talk about it directly. It's not an exact science, it's more an intuitive thing, and you're right, it does have a lot to do with interacting with the audience. But we don't manipulate them, we don't go out there and try to psyche them out or anything. It's quite involuntary.

MUSICIAN: Can you feel when it's happening?

GARCIA: There are times when both the audience and the band can feel it happening, and then there are times when we have to listen to the tapes afterwards to confirm our subjective impressions and see what really happened. That's the way we've been able to deduce the existence of this "x" chemistry. In any case, it doesn't have to do with our will.

MUSICIAN: Is there something you can consciously do to facilitate it?

GARCIA: Well, in a way that's what we're all about: making an effort to facilitate this phenomenon. But the most we can do is be there for it to happen. It just isn't anything we can control on any level we've been able to discover.

MUSICIAN: All right, if it isn't what you do, maybe it's who you are: the chemistry between you; the internal dynamics of the band; your value system; what you eat for breakfast. . .

GARCIA: I'm sure that's a major part of it.

MUSICIAN: Can you delineate some of the principles that you feel help maintain who you are?

GARCIA: Actually, trying to pinpoint those principles is our real work—it's what we're all about. As far as I can tell, they have to do with maintaining a moment-to-moment approach, in both a macro- and micro-cosmic sense. It's hard to maintain that moment-to-moment freedom in large-scale activities because things like booking tours have to be planned well in advance. So it's in the smaller increments, the note-to-note things, that we get to cop a little freedom. You can see it in our songs, where there's an established form and structure, but the particulars are left open. In terms of the macrocosm—the big picture—we know the tune, but in terms of the note-to-note microcosm, we don't know exactly how we'll play on any given night, what the variations might be.

fident about it at this point. It's become an evolving process that unfolds in front of us.

MUSICIAN: As a band you guys seem to have a dual personality; on one hand there's the improvisational, exploratory material like "Anthem" and "Dark Star," while on the other there's this very structured, tradition-bound sort of music. It was generally the earlier material that was stretching boundaries, while the albums from *Workingman's Dead* onwards have been more structured. So I was wondering if that was because the relationship between artist and audience was falling apart at that point, and that 60s energy envelope you were tapping into was beginning to disintegrate, forcing you to resort to simpler, more formalized material that didn't depend on that energy field?

GARCIA: No.

MUSICIAN: *Wait a minute, how did you know I was going to ask that?!*

GARCIA: (Smiles)

MUSICIAN: Okay, never mind, but what happens when you reverse the procedure and play *Workingman's Dead* in concert? Can you still get the same kineticism?

GARCIA: Yes, it turns out we can. For the last year or so we've been doing some of those tunes, like "Uncle John's Band" and "Black Peter," and they fit in well in that they become poles of familiarity in a sea of weirdness. It's nice to come into this homey space and make a simple statement. It comes off very beautifully sometimes. And inevitably it draws some of the weirdness into it. What's happening with the Grateful Dead musically is that these poles are stretching towards each other.

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MUSICIAN: Darn. . .it was such a great little theory. . .

GARCIA: Let me straighten that out right now. First of all, you're right about the audience/artist communication thing falling apart, although that didn't happen to us. Let me give you a time frame that might shed some light on all this: at the time we were recording and performing the *Live Dead* material onstage, we were in the studio recording *Workingman's Dead*. We weren't having much success getting that experimental stuff down in the studio, so we thought we'd strip it down to the bare bones and make a record of very simple music and see if *that* worked. Time was another factor. We'd been spending a long time in the studio with those exploratory albums, six to eight months apiece, and it was really eating up our lives.

MUSICIAN: You didn't feel any aesthetic conflict?

GARCIA: No, not at all. Because those two poles have always been part of our musical background. I was a bluegrass banjo player into that Bakersfield country stuff while Phil was studying Stockhausen and all those avant-gardists.

MUSICIAN: Is that where the. . .

GARCIA: . . .prepared piano stuff on "Anthem" comes from?

MUSICIAN: Which of your albums do you believe come closest to capturing the band's essence?

GARCIA: I'd pick the same things that everybody else would: *Live Dead, Workingman's Dead, American Beauty, Europe '72.* I'd take *Terrapin Station,* too, the whole record. I'd also definitely recommend the two live sets that just came out.

MUSICIAN: How important is the acoustic approach to the band?

GARCIA: Not very, because we only do it in special situations. In fact, there have only been two periods in our career when we did acoustic material: first in the early 70s, and then again just lately.

MUSICIAN: Why did you come back to it?

GARCIA: It's something that's fun for us because of the intimacy involved; it brings us closer together, both physically and psychologically, and as a result we play with a lot of sensitivity. I mean, I can just turn around like this and go (swats imaginary band member) HEY, WAKE UP! Lotsa' fun. . .

MUSICIAN: Speaking of direction: some people are wondering if you've gone totally off the experimental approach, since you

haven't released anything in that vein since *Terrapin Station* back in '77.

GARCIA: Yea, but '77 isn't really so long ago in Grateful Dead terms, you know. That's just a few records ago! Ideas around here take a year or so just to find their way to the surface, much less achieve their expression, which can take three or four years. We're always looking at the bigger picture. People have been hollering for us to bring back "Dark Star" and stuff like that for some time now, and we will. But in our own time.

MUSICIAN: You're not afraid of your old material?

GARCIA: Oh, absolutely not. It's partly that there's a new guy who hasn't been through all that with us, and we have to bring him up through all those steps slowly. It's not that he's a slow learner, it's because we originally spent months and months rehearsing those things that were in odd times.

MUSICIAN: Are you ever concerned that any of you will fall into cliched patterns, either as individuals or as a group?

GARCIA: No, because the musical personalities of the various members have been so consistently surprising to me over the years that I'm still completely unable to predict what they would play in any given situation. In fact, I'd challenge anyone to check out any Grateful Dead album and listen to, say, what Phil plays, and look for stylistic consistency. You won't find it. These guys are truly original musical thinkers, especially Phil. Let me give you an example: Phil played on four songs for a solo album of mine called *Reflections*. Now, I write pretty conventionally structured songs, so I asked Phil to play basically the same lines on each chorus so I could anchor it in the bass. But I didn't really see the beauty of what he'd done 'til later when I was running off copies of the tape at fast forward. The bass was brought up to a nice, skipping tempo, right in that mellow, mid-range guitar tone, and I was struck by the amazing beauty of his bass line; there was this wonderful syncopation and beautiful harmonic ideas that were barely perceptable at regular speed, but when it's brought up to twice the speed. . .God, it just blew me out.

MUSICIAN: Considering all the improvisations you do, I'm surprised you don't acknowledge jazz more as an influence on your playing. You had to be listening to Coltrane, at least.

GARCIA: Oh, definitely Coltrane, for sure. But I never sat down and stole ideas from him; it was more his sense of flow that I learned from. That and the way his personality was always right there—the presence of the man just comes stomping out of those records. It's not something I would've been able to learn through any analytical approach, it was one of those things I just had to flash on. I also get that from Django Reinhardt's records. You can actually hear him shift mood. . .

MUSICIAN: The humor in his solo on "Somewhere Beyond the Sea" is amazing. . .

GARCIA: Anger, too. You can year him get mad and play some nasty, mean little thing. It's incredible how clearly his personality comes through. It's one of those things I've always been impressed with in music. There's no way to steal that, but it's something you can model your playing on. Not in the sense of copying someone else's personality, but in the hopes that maybe I could learn how to let my own personality come through.

MUSICIAN: So it's a question of imitating essence, not form.

GARCIA: Right. My models for being onstage developed from being in the audience, because I've been a music fan longer than I've been a musician. A very important model for me was a bluegrass fiddle player named Scotty Sternman, who was a just a house-a-fire crazed fiddle player. He was a monster technically, played like the devil. Anyway, he was a terribly burnt-out alcohol case by the time I saw him, but I remember hearing him take a simple fiddle tune and stretch it into this incredible 20-minute extravaganza in which you heard just *everything* come out of that fiddle, and I was so moved emotionally that he became one of my models.

MUSICIAN: Looking back, were there any other groups or artists that were pivotal influences on your concept of the band?

GARCIA: There have been a couple of different things for a couple of different people. For myself, I was very, very impressed by the music of Robbie Robertson and the Band. There isn't any real textural similarity between what we play; I just admired their work very much.

MUSICIAN: Is there anybody on the current scene that you feel a particular kinship or identification with?

GARCIA: The Who. I think the Who are one of the few truly important architects of rock 'n' roll. Pete Townshend may be one of rock 'n' roll's rare authentic geniuses. And there's also the fact that they're among our few surviving contemporaries. . .I'm just really glad they exist.

MUSICIAN: I was talking with Ray Manzarek recently and he remembered reading Kerouac describe this sax player in a bar who had "it" that night, and how badly Ray wanted to get "it" too. . .whatever the hell it was.

GARCIA: Hey, that same passage was important to us! Very definitely. Our association with Neil Cassidy was also tremendously helpful to us in that way.

MUSICIAN: And of course there was Kesey and the Acid Tests. That must also have been about going for the essence and not getting stuck in forms. . .

GARCIA: Right, because the forms were the first thing to go in that situation. You see, the Acid Tests represented the freedom to go out there and try this stuff and just blow.

MUSICIAN: Did the acid simply amplify that impulse, or did it open you to the possibility in the first place?

GARCIA: Both. The Acid Test opened up possibilities to us because there were no strictures. In other words, people weren't coming there to hear the Grateful Dead, so we didn't have the responsibilities to the audience in the normal sense. Hell, they didn't know what to expect! Sometimes we'd get onstage and only tune up. Or play about five notes, freak out, and leave! That happened a couple of times; other times we'd get hung up and play off in some weird zone. All these things were okay, the reality of the situation permitted everything. That's something that doesn't happen in regular music circles—it took a special situation to turn us on to that level of freedom.

MUSICIAN: Had you experimented with either acid or musical "weirdness" before?

GARCIA: Yeah, we'd taken acid before, and while we were on the bar circuit playing seven nights a week, five sets a night, we'd use that fifth set when there was almost nobody there but us and the bartender to get weird. We joined the Acid Tests partly to escape the rigors of that 45 on, 15 off structure that the bars laid on us every night.

MUSICIAN: Did you have ideas about what all this might open you up to, or was it just "let's step through this doorway"?

GARCIA: Just that: let's step through this doorway. We didn't have any expectations.

MUSICIAN: Do you feel any ambivalence about it now? Acid had a down side for some people. . .

GARCIA: No, I loved it. I'd do it again in a second because it was such a totally positive experience for me, especially when you consider that we were at the tail end of the beatnik thing, in which an awful lot of my energy was spent sitting around and waiting for something to happen. And finally, when *did* happen, boy, I couldn't get *enough* of it! When we fell in with the Acid Test, I was ready to pack up and hit the road. We all went for it.

MUSICIAN: How did that evolve into the whole Haight-Ashbury scene?

GARCIA: What happened was that the Acid Test fell apart when acid became illegal, and Kesey had to flee to Mexico. We ended up down in L.A. hanging out with Owsley in Watts, then moved back to San Francisco three or four months later.

MUSICIAN: Were psychedelics really the main catalysts in initiating the Haight scene?

GARCIA: I think it was a very, very important part of it. Everyone at that time was looking hard for that special magic thing, and it was like there were clues everywhere. Everybody I knew

at least had a copy of *The Doors Of Perception*, and wanted to find out what was behind the veil.

MUSICIAN: What closed that doorway?

GARCIA: COPS!!

MUSICIAN: Just cops?

GARCIA: That's it, really, cops. . .It was also that this group of people who were trying to meet each other finally came together, shook hands, and split. It was all those kids that read Kerouac in high school—the ones who were a little weird. The Haight-Ashbury was like that at first, and then it became a magnet for every kid who was dissatisfied: a kind of central dream, or someplace to run to. It was a place for seekers, and San Francisco always had that tradition anyway.

MUSICIAN: Sort of a school for consciousness.

GARCIA: Yes, very much so, and in a good way. It was sweet. A special thing.

MUSICIAN: Sometimes I think that whole scene was a chance for our generation to glimpse the goal, and now we've got to find out how to get back there.

GARCIA: Right, and many people have gone on to reinforce that with their own personal energy. It *is* possible to pursue that goal and feed the dog at the same time. It just takes a little extra effort.

MUSICIAN: Can you talk about your relationship with the Hell's Angels? I played in a band backed by them in Berkeley and it was, uh. . .an ambivalent experience.

GARCIA: Well, that's it. It *is* ambivalent. I've always liked them because they don't hide what they are, and I think all they require of you is honesty—they just require that you don't bullshit them—and if you're out front with them, I think you don't have anything to worry about.

The Angels are very conscious of their roots and history, so the fact that we played at Chocolate George's funeral way back during the Haight-Ashbury was really significant to them. They didn't have many friends in those days, and so anybody who would come out for one of their members was demonstrating true friendship. And with them, that really counts for something.

MUSICIAN: What do you feel attracted Kesey to them in the first place? The noble savage concept?

GARCIA: No, I think Ken saw them for what they are: a definite force of their own which you can't hope to control. When they come around, it's reality, and you go with it.

MUSICIAN: What about Altamont?

GARCIA: Horrible.

MUSICIAN: It sure was. But having been in the Bay area at the time, I can understand how you might have thought it a good idea to recommend them as security people. . .

GARCIA: *We* didn't recommend them!!

MUSICIAN: I thought the Stones people said you suggested it?

GARCIA: Absolutely not! No, we would never do that. The Angels were planning on being there, and I guess the Stones crew thought this might be a good way to deal with that fact

MUSICIAN: The Angels aside, as soon as you entered that place you could feel this incredible selfishness—the complete antithesis of what went on at Monterey and Woodstock.

GARCIA: Yeah, that's what it was: an incredibly selfish scene. Steve Gaskin pinned it down best when he said that Altamont was "the little bit of sadism in your sex life the Rolling Stones had been singing about all those years, brought to its most ugly, razor-toothed extreme." Kind of ironic, since they were the ones who started that "Sympathy For The Devil" stuff.

MUSICIAN: You guys have avoided falling into the darker side of things. Did that require constant vigilance on your part?

GARCIA: It did for me at any rate. During the psychedelic experience the fear and awfulness inherent in making a big mistake with that kind of energy was very apparent to me. For me, psychedelics represented a series of teaching and cautionary tales, and a lot of the message was *"Boy, don't blow this!"* Back in the Haight there really were some Charlie Manson characters running around, really weird people who believed they were Christ risen and whatever, and who meant in the worst possible way to take the power. Some of them saw that the Grateful Dead raised energy and they wanted to control it. But we knew that the only kind of energy management that counted was the liberating kind—the kind that frees people, not constrains them. So we were always determined to avoid those fascistic, crowd control implications of rock. It's always been a matter of personal honor to me not to manipulate the crowd.

MUSICIAN: Did that temptation present itself?

GARCIA: Yeah, sometimes we'd discover a little trick that would get everybody on their feet right away, and we'd say let's *not* do that—if that's going to happen, then let's discover it new every time. Let's not plan it.

MUSICIAN: Back in those days there was a real bond between the audience and musicians. Something changed around '71, and it became a spectacle, with the audiences sucking up your energy and the band falling into egotistical superstar routines. It was entertainment rather than communication, and something special was lost. Were you aware of this change, or am I crazy?

GARCIA: Yeah, it was obvious, because in spite of all that talk about community, we knew it couldn't happen among the musicians, because each wanted to be the best and overshadow the others. A truly cooperative spirit was not likely to happen.

MUSICIAN: Was it the record companies and the materialistic orientation they represent that spoiled it?

GARCIA: I don't think so. To me, the record companies have never been a malicious presence. . .they're more like a mindless juggernaut.

MUSICIAN: I didn't mean that it was intentional on their part. I just feel they represent a set of values and a means of organization that are at odds with the goals of music. They created an environment in which the soul of music couldn't survive. . .

GARCIA: Yeah, I agree it was the music business and entertainment as a whole that killed it, because in entertainment there's always this formula thinking that encourages you to repeat your successes. All that posturing and stuff is what show business is all about, and that's what a lot of rock became: show business. It's just human weakness, and I guess it's perfectly valid for a rock star to get up there and. . .

MUSICIAN: But wasn't what happened in San Francisco a few years earlier on a much higher plane of experience? Audience and performer were meeting and interacting in a real way. . .

GARCIA: That's true, but that was something that just happened in the Bay Area, you know. It never made it to the East Coast, and it definitely didn't make it to England. And so those people were coming from a much more rigorous model of what it meant to be a rock 'n' roll star. That came from their management and business level, as things were lined up for them in advance and they were given those models as the way to do things. When we met English rock stars at the time, it was like meeting birds in gilded cages; they really wished there was some way of breaking out of what they were into, but they were trapped.

MUSICIAN: What happened to the energy field you'd established with your audience when you went to, say, New York or London?

GARCIA: We found that we'd brought it along with us, and the people who came to see us entered right into it. And that's what's made it so amazing for us, because our audience, in terms of genuineness, has been pretty much the same as it was back in the 60s. And so has our own experience.

MUSICIAN: Including your new generation of fans?

GARCIA: Sure. The 16-year-olds coming to see us now are no different than they were in the Haight; they're looking for a real experience, not just a show.

'MAKING MOVIES' WITH MARK KNOPFLER

Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler emerged overnight as a guitar hero in an age that had forgotten the term. His tasteful, sinuous playing and evocative songwriting earned both critical and commercial success. 'Making Movies' delivers passion and punch missing on their previous efforts and captures the full impact of Knopfler's rock and roll vision.

By Vic Garbarini

We don't know if, as some pundits claim, the 70's almost sounded the death knell of rock and roll, but it was certainly the Dark Ages as far as rock guitarists were concerned. Hendrix had gone back to where his music came from. Clapton was in hibernation. Beck got fused, and Carlos Santana got saved, and well, — confused. That left the high ground to the supergroups and metal heads who proceeded to grind out the kind of codified exercises in self indulgence that eventually helped midwife rock's answer to China's Cultural Revolution, namely punk.

So by the winter of '79, just when we thought it was safe to throw away those Mel Bay Easy Lead Guitar books, what should come storming on to both the AM and FM airwaves but a Dylanesque little number called "Sultans of Swing," featuring not just one, but *two* solos, and to make matters worse, the guys responsible for this overnight sensation, a band called Dire Straits, were just as unfashionable as their music: Bassist John Illsley formerly ran a lumber business and owned a record store. Rhythm guitarist David Knopfler was a social worker with a full case load; his brother Mark, who handled the songwriting, vocals and lead guitar, was lecturing in English literature at a local London college, and had put in time as a journalist at a major Yorkshire newspaper. Only Pick Withers, a session drummer with considerable experience touring both Britain and the Continent, had been working as a full time musician.

Their eponymously titled debut quickly became a world wide critical and commercial success, garnering praise from old and new wavers alike, and lead guitarist Mark Knopfler soon found himself tagged as a guitar hero in an age that had forgotten the meaning of the term. Knopfler proved to be a refreshingly unique stylist. His playing is stark yet sinuous, rooted in the blues, while at the same time exuding an elusive, otherworldly quality. Shimmering, crystalline phrases seem to hover forever like mirages, while gleaming, metallic notes flash and glimmer like dappled sunlight reflecting off the surface of a lake. He often treats notes like aural taffy, bending and pulling them far beyond the limits of normal Euclidean space, stretching them into Daliesque strips of sound. B.B. King Live From The Astral Plane.

Actually, blues based and otherworldly is a fairly accurate description of Knopfler himself. Of mixed Hungarian Jewish and English descent, (he resembles a cross between some incurably romantic Lake District poet and a Yeshiva student, — John Keats meets Woody Allen), Knopfler is one of those

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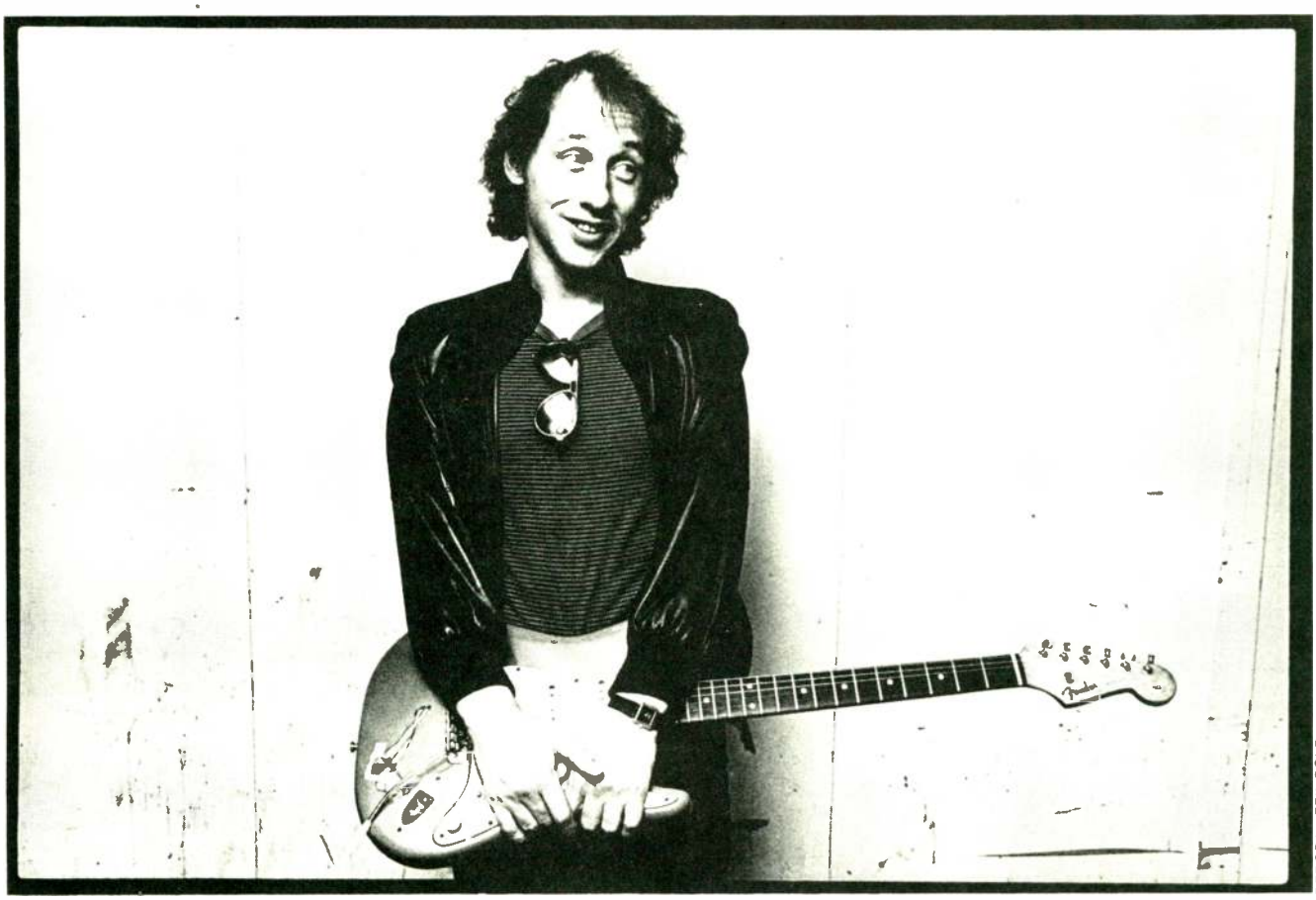
rare beings who manages to simultaneously keep both his head in the clouds and his feet on the ground. As a friend observed, Mark tends to talk the way he plays: long periods of quasi-mystical silence broken by dazzling brilliant snippets of speech or music.

Communique, their follow up to *Dire Straits*, was produced by Barry Beckett and Jerry Wexler in the Bahamas well before "Sultans" broke in the states. It was written off by some as a not quite up-to-par remake of their debut. (I beg to disagree: the production may have lacked punch, but Beckett and Wexler did succeed in deepening and enriching the band's overall sound, further highlighting the cinematic quality of Knopfler's songwriting.) Soon a revisionist theory began to form along the following lines: Knopfler was a superb and tasteful guitarist (perhaps a tad *too* tasteful—) with an assured future as a session man if he so desired (luminaries like Bob Dylan, Steely Dan, Bonnie Raitt, and Phil Lynott have already employed him in that capacity), though



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the the rest of the band were pretty disposable—amateurs along for the ride. This last criticism was patently unfair. Pick Withers has proved to be the kind of in-the-pocket, yet expressive drummer that most band leaders would trade their eye teeth for. And while John Illsley would be the last to claim virtuosity on his instrument, his straightforward, unobtrusive style on bass meshes neatly with Pick's playing to provide a solid undercarriage for Mark's excursions. David Knopfler, however, was a different story. An adequate, if hardly inspired rhythym guitarist (and nascent songwriter), David, like Creedence's Tom Fogerty a decade ago, began to realize that trailing along in the shadow of his older brother was leading him into a creative cul-de-sac. He decided to leave the band as they began work on their third album, and according to Illsley, the split was pretty amicable. "Mark and David are extremely close as brothers, but it became apparent to everybody that David would have to grow independently of Mark if he wanted to establish his own identity." Rather than seek an immediate replacement, the band brought in former Peter Gabriel guitarist Sid McGinnis to help complete the album. But McGinnis' chunky, Stones-like guitar work is only one of the radical shifts in direction evident on *Making Movies*. Clearly dissatisfied with what he considered the ineffectual production values of his earlier albums, Knopfler has found in Jimmy Iovine (Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, Graham Parker, Patti Smith) the kind of producer who could help him capture the explosive force missing from his previous records. The addition of Springsteen keyboardist Roy Bittan was another smart move, adding, as it does, further body to the overall sound while accenting and broadening the scope of Knopfler's inherent romanticism. Having assembled his erstwhile bionic band, Knopfler had finally acquired the kind of vehicle he needed to release his true rock and roll instincts.

MUSICIAN: The new record seems to indicate a substantial change in direction for you, with both the writing and the production values exhibiting a lot more muscle and punch. Is this something you've been aiming for all along?

KNOPFLER: It was what I was aiming for on the first record. It didn't happen then and—to put it very bluntly—it didn't happen on the second record either.

MUSICIAN: Why not?

KNOPFLER: Because a very naive guy, namely me, was attempting to imitate the first record . . . [long pause] . . . you can take some time to think about that one if you want.

MUSICIAN: I was just remembering that a lot of the criticism of *Communique* was that it was just a rehash of the first album, and yet . . .

KNOPFLER: That was the expressed intent. Jerry (Wexler) and Barry (Beckett), the producers, were wonderful to work with, and we have the utmost respect for them—we made a record that sold millions and went to No. 1 in countries all over the world—but there was just a certain live, muscular feel about it

that wasn't there. A lot of that was because Jerry and Barry wanted to get the guitar sound that was on the first record, and I didn't know enough about production at the time to deal with it—to know exactly what they were doing and say, "Look, what was on the first record is not what we want."

MUSICIAN: So that necessitated a switch in producers?

KNOPFLER: Yeah, because I felt that a lot of the power of my feelings in terms of music hadn't been translated onto vinyl.

MUSICIAN: Specifically, how did you go about beefing up the approach on *Making Movies*?

KNOPFLER: It wasn't really a "beefing up", that sounds like an advert for some kind of hamburger additive. It had more to do with the writing, in the sense that I made the songs in such a way that they *had* to be presented more forcefully, because of their structure. The actual form of the songs dictates that type of thing, and then you start looking for a producer who can make that kind of sound that goes BOOM. Someone who's not going to get in your way when you want to express that kind of explosion of sound.

MUSICIAN: Can you point to a record you've heard that has that kind of explosive immediacy you were looking for?

KNOPFLER: "Because The Night," by Patti Smith. But it wasn't just Patti Smith involved there—Springsteen helped write the song and Jimmy Iovine produced it.

MUSICIAN: Are your solos generally improvised, or do you prefer to work them out in advance?

KNOPFLER: I might work something out to a certain extent, and then try it on a take. When you're recording you might make two or three passes if you have the tracks on the machine, and sometimes they get put together. On the first album I pretty much knew how I wanted everything to sound.

MUSICIAN: Including "Sultans?"

KNOPFLER: Yeah, that was all down . . . if I remember, I sat on the floor in Deptford and worked it out over a few minutes, I had a kind of picture of the way it should go . . . ascending. So it was improvised in the same way that a lot of my playing is—your usual sloppy mess—with everything eventually stitched together.

MUSICIAN: What's the role of inspiration here?

KNOPFLER: Inspiration's a strange word. I do know that the times that you're inspired you're conscious of it happening, and it's a tremendous feeling because you're aware that you have something worth having and that people will respond to it. So the gladness you feel is a real happiness, because it's not just a happiness for yourself that the chords or the music fits; you're happy because you know other people are going to feel joy when they hear it.

MUSICIAN: Are you aware of those moments when they happen on stage? Can you feel the audience reacting?

KNOPFLER: Yeah, that's a slightly separate thing from the kind of inspiration involved in creating the song or solo, but it happens too, to the extent that kids will actually get up onto the stage.

MUSICIAN: Does that ever bother you?

KNOPFLER: Bother me? *I love it.* It's people like the road crew who worry, 'cause the mike's got to be in such and such a position . . . but it's just love, really a response to something that's shared. Pretty simple really. I suppose if it happens to us sometimes it must happen to people like Ted Nugent a lot. Playing in front of an audience is slightly different from making a record, but reproduction is part of the process: from the demo, to record, and finally on stage. In the same way that an actor must learn his lines, and every night he performs he has to try to infuse the lines with the original spirit. I think that's a really relevant element, in fact one of the things Jimmy Iovine says is: *"Hey, we're all actors."* That made concrete something I'd felt, but hadn't admitted to.

MUSICIAN: Do you ever play your solos differently on stage than you do on the records?

KNOPFLER: Yeah, all the time.

MUSICIAN: Some people claim that you *have* to change songs and solos to keep them fresh. It is possible to play "Sultans" note for note exactly like the record and still have it come alive?

KNOPFLER: Yes, in the same way an actor can bring his lines to life night after night. Going back, the time when you first play it in rehearsal, or when you first play it at home—just you and your guitar in the middle of the night—is very important. That's when you really hear it all, and the acting bit comes when you try to create "on screen" what you've heard in your mind. It's your imaginary movie. You're attempting to manifest that original inspiration, to bring it down to earth

MUSICIAN: How can you tell if you've really succeeded?

KNOPFLER: Well, it might not work because maybe the original idea was a bit bullshitty to begin with or it could be that you haven't tried hard enough; it could be that you just haven't managed to get the sound recorded in such a way as to translate your dream properly. Sometimes by the time you've finished recording you're so pissed off or tired of it that you've lost sight of the original impulse.

MUSICIAN: What prompted the decision to use a keyboardist (Roy Bittan, of Springsteen's E Street Band) for the first time on this album?

KNOPFLER: It's a kind of half-witted attempt to become more orchestrated. It's great to hear Roy playing on piano things that I might have realized on the guitar, but I like hearing it come out in a different medium. He helps me express thing that have always been floating around in my head.

MUSICIAN: Some guitarists feel that the guitar is a pretty limited medium compared to a piano.

KNOPFLER: Up until working with keyboards I used to think the guitar had everything: bass notes, solo notes, rhythms, which is true, and of course you can bend notes. In terms of expression, a voice doesn't have segmented notes on it the way a piano does, —it can slide up and down a scale, —and insofar as a guitar can duplicate that, it does have some advantages over a piano. But there's a whole thing about the voicing of a piano that fascinates me.

MUSICIAN: I felt listening to the new album that Roy really helped bring out the romanticism in your work, if I may refer to you as a romantic . . . .

KNOPFLER: You may. Feel free . . .

MUSICIAN: . . . in a somewhat similar vein as Springsteen. What is it about Roy's playing that you like?

KNOPFLER: Where to start? Great technique, wonderful voicing, the way he *feels* the music, lots of taste and experience. The way he listens to other musicians. To me he's a perfect balance between understanding music and feeling it. But the most important thing about him is that he plays like a *band* musician, like he's involved in the song the first time he plays it, which he is. It'd be great to have him play for you every night . . . if you could afford it!

MUSICIAN: Actually your own approach to guitar sounds pretty orchestral to me. Your chordal melodies remind me of Hendrix and Django Reinhardt.

KNOPFLER: (Long pause) . . . That's just too much of a compliment. I just can't respond to that . . . Django. . . .

MUSICIAN: Was Django a major influence on your development?

KNOPFLER: Yeah, I never owned any of his records but I did manage to listen to him quite a bit. He was such a natural and joyous guitar player, like Pete Townshend. Lonnie Johnson impressed me, too. I first heard his stuff in 1969 and . . . I mean . . . I'd been listening to B.B. King since I was sixteen and here suddenly was this amazing guy I'd not known about, and it turns out that *he* influenced B.B. King. I was really pleased when I found out about that connection. With all these guys the important thing to me was the way they could make one individual note sound. With each note there's a sense of the notes that have gone before, and the ones that are going to come. Not necessarily all of them, but a sense of the way the

whole thing is going to move. In the same way that a great song will always be a great song: it brings what it has from the past with it into the future. Any great song will be recognized by that sense of past, present, and future all there at the same time. But about guitar, I don't really consider myself to be very technically proficient; I don't really know all that much about music, and I'm not proud of the fact. There are these horrible gaps in my knowledge.

MUSICIAN: But you're such a refreshingly natural player. Do you ever get afraid that if you learned too much about the instrument that you might choke off your creativity?

KNOPFLER: No, because whatever I learn musically I'd never just use in a display of technique. But I know what you're getting at—the feeling has to be there. I hate music that's purely cerebral. Rock and roll is such a powerful medium because it maintains a balance between the mind and the feelings.

MUSICIAN: You never play with any effects or devices on stage, the people at MXR must weep at the mention of your name . . . .

KNOPFLER: Not true! I use an MXR Analog Delay on the stage every bleedin' night . . . .

MUSICIAN: . . . but you never use fuzz tone or anything like that, you seem to prefer a clear, natural tone. Is that because you like the natural sound of the Stratocaster?

KNOPFLER: The Strat's part of it, but I didn't own one until three years ago. I had a Gibson before that, which I loved, but the sound wasn't translating properly for me. It doesn't matter if it's a guitar or a producer, the touch point has to be translatable, it has to come through. With a Strat you've got single core pickups that can relate directly to what you're doing with your fingers, so the effect will never overpower the stimulus.

MUSICIAN: There's more of a direct transference of your intentions . . . ?

KNOPFLER: Yeah, so if your basic signal is right, then when you use an effect after that you're more likely to get what you want. It's possible to make something good from a limited signal, but if your basics are clear and direct to begin with, then anything you add like echo or whatever can only be an improvement. But the clarity I go for has its dangers too: I can't afford to make many mistakes cause they're always so damn obvious!

MUSICIAN: The wah-wah pedal can cover a multitude of sins.

KNOPFLER: They can be used constructively, too. Look at Jimi Hendrix. I use a volume foot pedal, which brings the sound in from nowhere, and I think that's very similar. I don't use effects that I feel would distort the sound completely from the way it was intended, but with the level pedal you're using your foot—which is part of your body—so the impulse is coming directly from you. That's a Morley level pedal, by the way. The great thing about them is that you can stand on them on stage and they're strong enough to take it.

MUSICIAN: When we were talking before you said that you considered your songwriting more important than your guitar solos, which surprised me.

KNOPFLER: The song is the main thing—everything else should be subservient to it. Soloing should never be an excuse to show off technical virtuosity, it's supposed to complement—to extend—the song itself. For instance when you talk about a Rolling Stones record, to me, you're talking about really great rock and roll; but I never listen to a Rolling Stones song and wonder—God forbid—*where's the solo*?

MUSICIAN: Do you feel that the real intent of your songs gets across to your audience? Do you get any feedback on that?

KNOPFLER: It's really funny being in a band and hearing what happens to your songs—how they're used or interpreted. "Once Upon A Time In the West" was actually banned in East Germany, where it became an underground hit, because the kids thought it was written for them. Then you find that Allan Wicker (English television commentator) used it on a program about the Los Angeles Police Department . . . and Milton Friedman, the economist, used it in a documentary about capitalism!

MUSICIAN: How did you feel about that?

KNOPFLER: It's kind of funny. To me, that song being used by Milton Friedman is like a Frank Zappa tune being used by a Boy Scout troop. On the other hand, there was a documentary on English T.V. about women writers that used "Lady Writer" as a theme, and that gave me some satisfaction, to provide that kind of soundtrack service, or offering some kind of inspiration that a filmmaker can utilize. In fact, we're working on a short film based on the *Making Movies* album, though it's more about the songs really than about ourselves.

MUSICIAN: Why do you think it is that the English have produced so many of our great rock guitarists?

KNOPFLER: Maybe they feel more affection, love—a mystique—for records that have come from far away. If you're thirty years old and English you've grown up on beat music, Radio Luxembourg, rockabilly . . . I played rockabilly every night with a group called the Cafe Racers before we formed this band. We'd do things like "Move It," "Good Morning Little Schoolgirl," "Gloria," "Red Hot"—a mix of old rock, blues and rockabilly. There's a certain feeling that comes from that type of music that you absorb and utilize in your own work. If you listen to "Expresso Love" on the new album, the guitar figure that runs through the first few bars has that rockabilly feel. The key to that sound, what gives it "swing" feeling, has to do with the drummer keeping his wrists loose and pliable, unlike the stiffer approach used in a lot of conventional rock.

MUSICIAN: How consciously do you incorporate that kind of thing in your present work?

KNOPFLER: You don't treat it nostalgically—you're not going to just reproduce it in the way certain British musicians do. You're not even going to write that way. What you try to do is project the love you felt for the music during your childhood.

MUSICIAN: What happens when you play with somebody outside the band? Do you pretty much look for what they want? For instance, on the Dylan album you played in more of straight B.B. King style. Did Dylan ask for that?

KNOPFLER: He never asked for anything. We had just finished our tour in L.A., and I drove down to Santa Monica and rehearsed the songs with him. He wasn't playing guitar at the time, he was playing a kind of rudimentary gospel piano. So I'd just come down and plug in one of his guitars and off we'd go. He told me he wanted to make a different type of record—that up till then he'd been making what he called "home" records, and that he wanted this one to be professional. That was his way of describing it.

MUSICIAN: I'd heard that there was some friction at the Steely Dan session you did, and that you felt you were misquoted in one of the English papers about it. Could you clear that up?

KNOPFLER: I felt that I was both misquoted and misused. I had this great love affair with Steely Dan when their first three albums came out . . . saw them play in London . . . I was really into them, partly because at the time I was developing as a player and just admired what they were doing in the studio. So when they asked me to do the session—I think it was the first session I ever did—I remember being hurried down there one night and feeling like I'd been *summoned*, in a sense. I don't know if all your readers understand this, but every musician knows that Steely Dan are considered to be . . . the dudes that *can* . . . as far as all that shit goes. And already, riding up in the lift at Sigma studios, I felt like a kind of object . . . and was treated . . . almost like a *tool*. And for me that's an impossible situation.

MUSICIAN: How did you handle it?

KNOPFLER: First of all, I tried to stave off that kind of thing by asking for a tape beforehand, and I thought, well, this is the way I feel it, and this is the way I'm going to play it. And that *is* how I played it—all night; I'm not going to be told what to play by anybody. No matter how many takes they went through—that's the way I felt it, so that's how I played it.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

MUSICIAN: What was it about their attitude that didn't synch with that?

KNOPFLER: They were searching for something that didn't have much relation to the expression that I thought was needed at the time. I have so much love for what they've done, and then . . . I'd be there and Walter and Donald would be saying "Can *he* do this, or can *he* do that," referring to me in the third person while I was standing there. I know now that that's a kind of American thing—that's how Americans talk sometimes; even we've started picking it up a bit—and they were talking like you'd been brought in to provide this kind of service. In a way it wasn't too different from a drain cleaning operation. That's the way I felt at the time, because I was so naive about it. For someone to negate me like that is impossible for me, so I'm bound to be negative about it, both at the time and afterwards. I tried to do for them what I thought was best, but I felt this was another kind of . . . animal. I still have the utmost respect for them, it's just not exactly my way of working. To me, music is more than just bringing someone in and using them like . . . it's almost like a model agency that hasn't got the model that's on the most covers that month, so it tries to get that model. What I really want to say is that I know it's not *really* like that—they really feel . . . with a capital "F"—but the reality is that in the studio it comes out as a utilization of something. It's like something's been taken from you.

MUSICIAN: One of the things that stands out about you guys is that you're fairly well grounded. You, for instance, are an ex-college lecturer and journalist, which is not your typical rock and roll up-from-the-streets background. I'm curious about how guys like you reacted to the whole success and stardom routine.

KNOPFLER: I think we're a lot luckier than most in that by the time you're around 30, your personality is mostly formed and you've had to learn to express yourself in terms of your personality before—to come to terms with yourself—so it really doesn't make much difference after that, whatever happens. That's why when all these bullshit and glamour-associated things happen . . . it's not that we don't enjoy it . . . I'd recommend fame and fortune to anybody. There's nothing nicer than sitting by a mock-classical swimming pool in the Bahamas and talking to a journalist. It beats going to bed on your own and reading Agatha Christie in some bedsit in Chippenham when you've got to go to the teacher's training college the next bleeding day. But that's cool too, of course. I did it myself for quite a while. But as far as the fame thing goes: you enjoy it to a certain extent but your priorities are really somewhere else.

MUSICIAN: How did "Sultans of Swing" come about? Are you into jazz?

KNOPFLER: I'd just heard a jazz band one night, and as a fluke I'd been playing guitar in a jazz band for one or two nights around that time. I'm not really into jazz all that much, but to me a song like "Creole Love Song" is as beautiful now as it was then, and always will be, whether it's Roland Kirk doing it or whoever. To me it's all rythym and blues music—that's where it all comes from.

MUSICIAN: To what extent are your songs self-referential?

KNOPFLER: Depends on the song . . .

MUSICIAN: How about something like "News?" You seemed to be drawing on your journalistic background there.

KNOPFLER: The idea sprang from a tiny little paragraph I saw in a newspaper about a motorcyclist who died in an accident. Obviously there was a story behind that. I'd been working for newspapers at an early age and found out the kind of stuff that gets into the news and the kind of stuff that doesn't, and the kind of decisions that go into formulating just what constitutes news, so it was all related to that.

MUSICIAN: Is there anything else you'd like to say to our faithful readers before we close up shop?

KNOPFLER: Yeah . . . *Don't believe what you read in the papers!* —the musical vocabulary. Out of necessity, if nothing else, you have to move on.

RUDE BOYS

An Interview with Joe Strummer and Robert Fripp

By Vic Garbarini

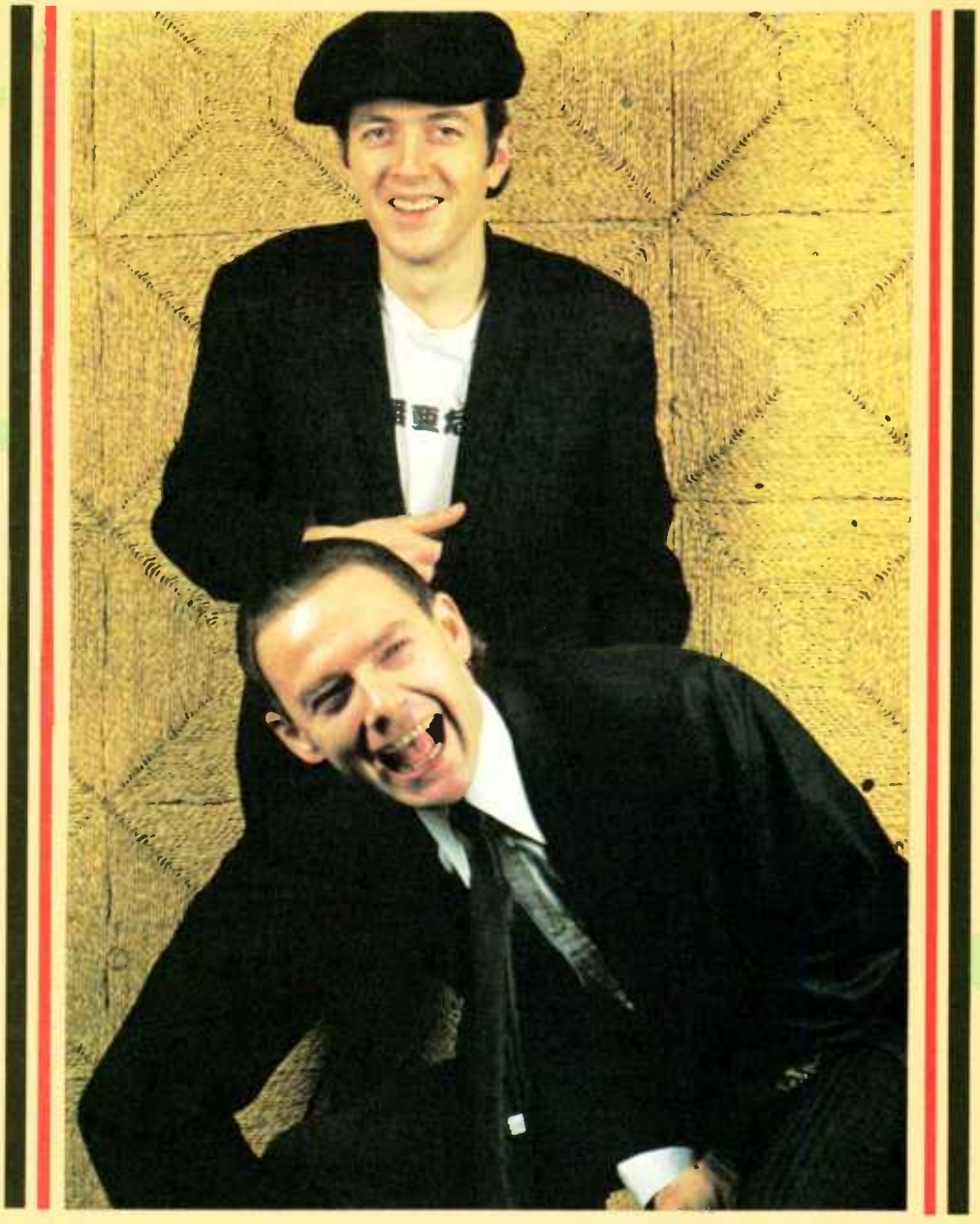
The basic idea was fairly simple: you get the two foremost proponents of the idea of music as a force for personal and social change, sit 'em down together for a few beers, and see what happens. Now let's look at the potential problems: on the surface, polite, articulate Robert Fripp and acerbic, streetwise Joe Strummer don't appear to be the most compatible duo in rock history. I mean, you wouldn't expect them to bunk together at summer camp, would you? As musicians they seem to follow widely divergent paths, with the classically trained Fripp exploring the oceanic textures and laser-like solos of Frippertronics, or the fractured, geometric etudes of *The League of Gentlemen*, while Strummer the street poet and musical innocent bashes out three chord symphonies, or heads further up river into the dark, sensual heartland of reggae and dub. But I had a strong feeling things were not what they seemed on the surface, and the two had more in common than might be apparent at first glance. What links them goes far deeper than style, personality, musical taste, or social background. It's a question of sharing a sense of commitment, both to their music and society at large, and having the courage and integrity to back up their ideals with action. It involves a willingness to risk everything—including career, financial security, and public approval—to pursue their visions without compromise. In short, I believed that Robert Fripp and Joe Strummer were tapping the same wellspring and aiming for the same goal. Originally, I had wanted the two of them to meet by themselves. When I sprang the idea on Fripp while waiting for a Manhattan subway (real men of the people, eh?) he readily agreed, provided I come along as moderator. We planned to meet in London, where Robert was going to begin rehearsal with his new band Discipline, a dream aggregation consisting, besides Fripp, of ex-Crimson mate Bill Bruford on drums, former Bowie and Talking Heads sideman Adrian Belew on guitar, and session ace Tony Levin (Peter Gabriel, Paul Simon, John Lennon, among others) on bass. Strummer wasn't so easy to pin down. It took us two weeks to locate him in the small London studio, where he was rehearsing with his band for their upcoming U.S. tour, and he was hesitant at first when I mentioned bringing Fripp along. "Okay, fine," I said, "if you'd rather not I can just come over and do a straight interview." "No," answered Strummer, "I guess we can try it. After all, Fripp's probably closer to what we're trying to do than anybody I can think of." Within a week Fripp and I were standing in a funky, garage-like London studio, watching the world's greatest garage band work through some decidedly funky rhythms. (Actually, Fripp insisted on going downstairs first to watch Top of the Pops and get his hair cut by the lovely Mary Lou Green. Foreigners are like that.) Strummer seemed polite but reserved, and suggested we retire to the friendly neighborhood pub for refreshments. Once there, we positioned ourselves strategically in front of some massive stereo speakers that were connected via some cleverly concealed wires to ... good*no*! a massive turntable, which in turn was connected to a massive disc jockey. THATWASABBAWITHDANCING-QUE...ANDNOWTHENEWESTSINGLEFROMDIRESTRAITS!!! Swell. Strummer ordered beers all around, one of which he shoved in my direction. As I pushed it away he smiled and asked what's the matter, too *big* for 'ya." I decided not to explain about my gallstones and how I'm not supposed to drink, especially on an empty stomach . . . oh, oh, what the hell, why not? It'll probably loosen me up. It was a decision that I would later regret, to say nothing of the chap whose shoes I would barf all over in the 'loo and the transcriptionist who would type up the

tape. ("Here's your money back. *Please* do it yourself . . . and who the hell is that drunk guy and why didn't they turn down the music!?") In any case, I liked Strummer. He had a no-nonsense air about him, but also a considerable sense of warmth and humanity. And I was genuinely impressed by how he went out of his way to put me at ease as we started the tapes rolling.

MUSICIAN: One of the reasons I wanted to get the two of you together is. . .
STRUMMER: You're a bully, you know.
MUSICIAN: What?
STRUMMER: I bet you had to bully him (pointing to Fripp) as much as you had to bully me to get him here.
MUSICIAN: How did I bully you?
STRUMMER: Well, you know, you bend my ear and give me an earache, and then you probably forced him to come here and get it just as well. You don't think he'd *want* to be here, do you? Only *you* could come up with such dumb ideas!
MUSICIAN: (Smiles and nods vigorously)
STRUMMER: Not that I'm saying they're dumb completely, mind you. They might have something in them.
MUSICIAN: Look, he loved the idea. When I mentioned it to him as an aside, he immediately said he'd love to do it, right, Robert? . . . Robert?
FRIPP: I wonder if we can get something to eat here? Maybe a ploughmans lunch, just some cheese and bread.
STRUMMER: He bullies people, this one.
MUSICIAN: Okay, let's start again. One of the main things you

PHOTOS: STEVE SANDON

two have in common is the belief that music can actually change society. How can that happen?
STRUMMER: Because music goes directly to the head and heart of a human being. More directly and in more dimensions than the written word. And if *that* can't change anybody, then there's not a lot else that will. Music can hit as hard as if I hit you with a baseball bat, you know? But it's not an overnight thing; you can't expect everything to change quickly. I figure it's an organic process. Insidious. Look how listening to all those hippie records has affected everybody in general: everybody feels looser about things now.
FRIPP: I did a radio show in New York with Bob Geldorf of the Boomtown Rats recently, and he said he didn't believe rock and roll can change anything. And I said to him, I disagree. So he said, well, if you build up hope in Joe Bloggs in some slum in Northern Ireland, he's just going to wind up disappointed. And I said, look, if there's Joe Bloggs in his appalling social conditions in Northern Ireland with no hope, and that becomes Joe Bloggs at No. 8 in his appalling social conditions but *with* hope, you have two entirely different situations.
STRUMMER: That's right. Good point that.
FRIPP: Then it's possible for the geezer at No. 10 to get some hope, too. And then it spreads up the street, and you have a community. Then you're talking about something which isn't dramatic and exciting, but which contains the possibility of *real* change. It's easy to miss because it's essentially personal, and it's very quiet. And like Joe says, it takes time.
MUSICIAN: Is it the music itself that can do this, or does it merely serve as a rallying point?
FRIPP: Both, really. It serves as a rallying point, but it can work more directly too. I think sometimes at a really good gig when there's a certain quality in the music, a kind of liberation can take place, and you don't go home and take quite as much crap from the news as you did before, because you've actually tasted a different quality of experience which changes how you think about things. So to a degree you've been liberated.
MUSICIAN: How did you both wind up choosing music as your means of expression? How were you feeling about things in general, or what made you decide it had to be a band? That there was something you needed or could accomplish through rock?
STRUMMER: Well, I started playing music around '73. I'd tried everything else, and I couldn't find anything I wanted to do or anywhere to be. So I got into music because it seemed like the best thing around. You could say it was the thing that had the least laws and restrictions about it.
FRIPP: I was trained as a guitarist. So I took lesso[illegible] I suppose I eventually could have become a classical guitarist. But it seemed that I was spending years and years working incredibly hard to have the opportunity to play other people's music. In terms of even serious music, the guitar repertoire is pretty second rate. And it's anachronistic. Hearing Hendrix hit one chord said infinitely more to me than the enti[illegible] classical guitar repertoire. And I realized that rock was very malleable—that within it you can play classical music or jazz or blues or whatever you cared to, and it was still rock. If you went outside the form in jazz or classical you were selling out. But if you did it in rock music you were gifted!
MUSICIAN: What about you, Joe? If you had to point to your major source of inspiration who or what would it be?
STRUMMER: Bo Diddley.
MUSICIAN: Right. Incidentally, the stuff I heard you playing at rehearsal tonight sounded a lot closer to George Clinton than to "White Riot."
STRUMMER: That's one of the most important things I've come to over the last few years—feeling more into funky music. In the beginning I just couldn't take it at all. I thought it was a waste of time. Putting people to sleep.
MUSICIAN: *Sandinista* is obviously a further step for you into black and Third World music. It seems that reggae and dub are for you guys what the blues and R&B were for English rockers of the 60s. Is that fair to say?
STRUMMER: Well, yeah, it's the feeling in that music that's the real attraction, and the fact that it's topical music and has something to say. But I'd say *all* music's third world music, 'cause it all comes from Africa originally. In any case, a lot of the music I admire is black.
MUSICIAN: Do you find something in funk and reggae that rock and roll doesn't have? On *Sandinista* you did "Police On My Back" and a few . . .
STRUMMER: But rock and roll doesn't exist now!
MUSICIAN: What do you mean by that?
STRUMMER: That was heavy metal—that was something to do with other people and it has nothing to do with me. I don't even understand what it's all about.
MUSICIAN: Alright, what do you call what you were doing on your first two albums?
STRUMMER: That was punk rock. Which still exists, but I'm not interested in that either.



MUSICIAN: Why not? Because it's lost its creative impetus?
STRUMMER: Yeah, the fans killed it. They wanted it to stay the same, and that ended our interest in it. Now they got what they deserved: a lot of rubbish, basically.

FRIPP: Rock, which in a way is our 20th Century Classical music, is essentially Afro-American. I went to see the Dizzy Gillespie Dream Band in New York, and he said "we're very pleased that we have two *white* guys in the band tonight." And he was making a point because you knew where the music was coming from.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of evolving musical forms and working in different styles: I got the new Ellen Foley record recently and I noticed that you and Mick wrote most of the tunes, and that you all (the Clash) back her up on the record. I played it for a few people and asked "now, who do you think this is?" Most people thought it was Abba . . .

STRUMMER: That's a compliment!

FRIPP: Abba are very, very good.

MUSICIAN: I agree, but I'm surprised to hear you both say that. What do you like about them?

STRUMMER: They hardly ever lay a turkey on you.They've kind of hit a rut these days, but they were in there just blammin' 'em onto the charts which is admirable . . .

MUSICIAN: Since *London Calling* there's been a marked change in your musical approach: more emphasis on melody, increasingly sophisticated song structures, even a few ballads. Is this something you guys felt capable of all along? How did it come about that at that point in time you blossomed musically?
STRUMMER: It's a bit like weight lifting, in a way. If we met every day and did some weight training, in a year we'd be the heroes of the beach. We were just flexing our muscles in a musical sense. Obviously, if you absorb yourself in music and practice every day you become more capable.
MUSICIAN: And you feel that you don't have to stick to that three chord screaming punk intensity in order to keep your creative spark alive?
STRUMMER: Yeah, that's how we see it. But will the audience accept it?
MUSICIAN: Well, that's the question. What do you think?
FRIPP: Two to five years, right? *(general laughter)* Seriously! It takes about that long to disseminate. It's like throwing a rock in

the middle of a lake and waiting for the ripples to get to shore. And in our industry, I've noticed it takes two to five years for an idea to be accepted.

STRUMMER: God, that's depressing. Our records will be deleted by then!

MUSICIAN: It seems that during the punk era there was a tremendous release of energy, and it didn't matter how the music came out because everybody could feel the intensity . . .

STRUMMER: Correction. It *used* to not matter.

MUSICIAN: Alright, now it does. So you come to a point where you want to refine and develop your music, but you don't want to lose that energy. How do you do that? How do you keep it alive? How do you avoid becoming like those 70s bands, just going through the motions?

STRUMMER Well, that's where everybody winds up, isn't it?

MUSICIAN: Are you going to end up like that?

STRUMMER: Someone would give you odds on that.

FRIPP: With the early Crimson, were were all very desperate geezers . . .

STRUMMER: *(To Fripp)* Do you remember a tent in Plimpton?

FRIPP: Can I tell you why we played there? The agency that booked it hadn't been completely straight with us, so we said, you're no longer our agents. So instead of putting us on front stage—where we'd wipe out anything they had—they stuck us in the tent, so we wouldn't touch anyone. It was a deliberate agency move to fuck up our careers.

STRUMMER: And the Who were dead boring that night.

FRIPP: I remember there was a girl still there an hour after we packed up. She was still there, and suddenly she says "Is it finished?" An hour after it was over.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of live gigs, I was just telling Mick before that I saw you the second time you came to New York, and to tell the truth I wasn't very impressed with the show.

STRUMMER: That's not illegal.

MUSICIAN: But I kept hearing fantastic reports about you in concert, so I came to the Palladium the third time you played there and suddenly . . .

STRUMMER: A GIANT BOUNCER GRABBED YOU AND DASHED YOUR HEAD AGAINST THE WALL!! And then it all made sense. No, go on . . .

MUSICIAN: Actually, it *was* something like that. Suddenly it all came into focus—it was like a hole opened up and you guys were a channel for a high quality of energy. I was literally stunned.

FRIPP: It was the best rock and roll show I've seen in six years.

STRUMMER: Sometimes I think it's equally shitty every night and it's the audience that changes in their perception of it. I remember once Devo got a hold of Sandy Pearlman when he was mixing our sound at the Santa Monica Civic. They didn't come around and say hello to us, right? They snuck around back and got a hold of Sandy at the mixer and said "How do you get that sound? Tell us how it's done!" And they didn't realize it was just the way we were going like this (hunches and strums intensely) on the guitars, you know what I mean? It wasn't particularly what *slave* amps you had in the P.A. or the equalizers or whatever. It was the way we were going at it.

MUSICIAN: Do you ever feel that an audience is just sucking you dry of energy, and not really participating in the experience?

STRUMMER: Yeah, I feel that sometimes. And I get angry and tell them about it when I do.

FRIPP: Do you feel sometimes that people want you to be up there doing what they expect, and if you go off on another course—like if you do a record which isn't what they think you should do—you're going to get clobbered for it? Do you feel misinterpreted at times?

STRUMMER: Yeah, sure. There was this one journalist who described us as "the best amphetamine rush in town," right? And so I went to the press reception to see what it was all about, because I felt like we were being discovered as some new kind of *drug*. I found it a bit offensive.

MUSICIAN: If you had to put into 25 words or less what it is you're trying to say when you get up on stage, what would it be?

STRUMMER: LOOK AT ME!

MUSICIAN: [Laughs] Yeah, but lots of bands do that and they don't get the same response you do. What's the difference?

FRIPP: Anything a performer does on a public platform is significant, even just scratching your ass. When I go on stage as "Robert Fripp" it's more real, more alive. I can do stuff I can't do as "Bob Fripp from Wimbourne, Dorset," And it has a significance quite apart from me. When I was with the Crimson team, and even now, as soon as ego gets involved in it or when the audience is dumping its ego on me, and saying "you have to be our ideal of what we think you should be," it becomes masturbation rather than consummation. It feels dirty. But when you do a gig, and maybe it's not even a good gig, but somehow there's a relationship between the audience and performers that's right, then no one's ripped anyone off. And it feels good. It feels clean. It feels like an honorable way of working. Now, both the musicians and the audiences have responsibilities to each other. For instance, sometimes you don't want to get up and play, but you said you would so you do it. You have a part of you that makes that committment and the rest of you follows.

STRUMMER: This is interesting to me. What would you do for a living if not music?

FRIPP: I'd probably still do it, but in a non-public context.

STRUMMER: You mean just for your mates?

FRIPP: Yes. And some guitar teaching. Actually, I'd like to be able to go out and play 250 seaters with other musicians. At the moment, I can only afford to do it on my own. I don't want to play 3,000 seaters because I feel I can't make contact with the people I'm playing to. I told my management that today and they said "you can't do it your way; you can't pay the bills that way."

MUSICIAN: Isn't this similar to what you're doing with *Sandinista!*: keeping the price down to the point where you're not going to make any money off it unless it sells 200,000 units?

STRUMMER: Yeah, that's the specific deal for the U.K., Which is going really badly now. It's a big flop. The thing I like about making a stand on prices is that it's *here and now*, and not just a promise. It's dealing with reality: how many bucks you're going to have to part with at the counter to get it. It's one of the few opportunities we have to manifest our ideals, to make them exist in a real plane. To do it in Thatcher's Britain during a recession was a kind of flamboyant gesture.

FRIPP: Can you make money just from doing gigs?

STRUMMER NO. A *big* no! It's like throwing money away. That's our ultimate aim, to be able to break even on tour. No matter how carefully you do it, you always come out in the red.

MUSICIAN: Robert, you were saying yesterday that if you went out alone and did Frippertronics on the road, you could make money. Is there any way of doing that in a group context?

FRIPP: Well, the traditional answer is yes, providing you play 3,000 seaters. But my response is that if you play 3,000 seaters, your expenses will rise accordingly. And so you say you'll play 1,000 seaters, and your expenses match that. But even so, to break even—working with four musicians—is a work of art.

STRUMMER: I believe you!

FRIPP: King Crimson only made money *after we broke up*. After six years of hard work we had a deficit of $125,000. When we disbanded, the records went on selling and that's how we finally made some money. Nowadays, I spend more time working at approaches to business than I do to music. I reckon I spend 1% of my professional life actually playing guitar. And that's not an exaggeration—that's literal!

MUSICIAN: While we're on the subject of the marketplace, I wanted to ask you both about success and recognition. In terms of the deeper values of the music, does it mean anything to break into the Top Forty. Is that any kind of a victory?

STRUMMER: I'll tell you when it all went sour for me: when I realized that the chart was only compiled in the straight record shops, not in the specialist shops where the real fans go. It's the

housewife market, really. It's a cross section of grannies and teenyboppers and mummies buying it, you know?

FRIPP: But getting back to this thing about live gigs, Joe. Do you do anything to build up energy before you go on?

STRUMMER: Yeah, I like to get into a mental panic before the show—to really wind myself up before I get onstage.

MUSICIAN: Anything else?

STRUMMER: I drink a lot of orange juice.

MUSICIAN: When the punk thing started a lot of groups were espousing a new set of ideals, but in many cases it was just words—they couldn't sustain it. What keeps you guys honest?

STRUMMER: The horror of becoming the new Rolling Stones. We stood there in 1976 and thought, "this whole place is *lousy*. The Stones started here—what are they doing about it?" We felt like they'd caught a buzz off London and it had made them. And they could have come back and done . . . I don't know what . . . but I just felt they weren't there. And we really didn't want to become that. We saw that as the way *not* to turn out.

MUSICIAN: There's a lot of leftist ideology in your lyrics, but you're obviously not doctrinaire Marxists.

STRUMMER: Toeing any line is obviously a dodgy situation, because I'm just not into a policy or I'd have joined the Communist party years ago. I've done my time selling *The Morning Star* at pit heads in Wales, and it's just not happening.

MUSICIAN: In the song "the Equalizer" you talk about everyone having equal income . . .

STRUMMER: I'm not saying that. I read this thing in Marx that really bit me about why is the person who owns the factory allowed to take more of the profits than the person who does all the work? It's an equal input—you own the factory and I do the work—so we should split the profits.

MUSICIAN: And yet on both *London Calling* and *Sandinista!* you admit that just money alone isn't the answer.

STRUMMER: Well, the Beatles said it years ago, "Money Can't Buy You Love."

MUSICIAN: Have you ever read E. F. Schumacher? He takes both capitalism and communism to task for missing the essential point in the whole argument: income should be more equal, but we have to go beyond that.

STRUMMER: An organic theory, right?

MUSICIAN: Yeah. A shift to satisfying the real needs of human nature, not just earning a buck.

STRUMMER: Yeah, it's horrible to think that people spend their whole lives in a rubber factory, pulling the rubber along the belt because the machine doesn't work. I couldn't have done it. The hell with it! Is that what we have to have? I just can't believe it, and yet it seems irreversible. Maybe it's too late to say "Small is beautiful," and all that.

MUSICIAN: Maybe it's too late to save the system as we know it, but maybe that's the point—that if things fall apart, they'll be a chance to build something better. That's the kind of hope I hear in your music.

FRIPP: If I can address some of these questions: Marx was something of an old fart. He was an authoritarian and a centralist, and what he proposed was essentially the same as capitalism, except with a different set of people in charge. In any kind of realistic political change you have to start on the inside, by changing the central value system. You can't start by changing the structure, change has to be a personal choice.

MUSICIAN: Meaning you can't have a just and equitable structure if the individuals that comprise it are still operating from greed and egocentricity?

FRIPP: Right, therefore change has to be a personal choice. And it's got to be gradual, because normal political life has to do with changing externals by force, and any kind of force is going to breed it's opposite reaction. So, if you force a welfare society on people, but their personal values and way of life haven't changed for the better, they're going to wind up disliking each other even more than they did before. Another important thing is that if you have an aim in mind, you have to work as if it's already achieved. You can't create a democracy by imposing a dictatorship on people until they're ready for democracy. You have to be democratic yourself. Your way of going there is where you're going.

MUSICIAN: I wanted to ask Joe about his attitude towards violence. You use the imagery of violence, but I don't think you really believe it's the answer. Am I right or wrong?

STRUMMER: Of course not! Violence isn't an answer to anything.

MUSICIAN: What about in the case of *Sandinista!?* Obviously, Somoza was overthrown by force.

STRUMMER: Sure, but that's practical violence. Somoza ain't going to go unless you shoot a few hundred of his guards. I'm not saying that I could get into that here in Britain, but I think in Nicaragua the situation certainly demanded it. Think of how many campesinos were slaughtered there since 1919. It must run into the *millions!* In that situation, I condone picking up a gun.

FRIPP: I've found that American bands aren't politically aware.

STRUMMER: Yeah, why is that? There's only one I know, called Prairie Fire, and they're so heavily communist it turns you off.

FRIPP: I think English musicians are more politically acute because our social system is so crazy over here that you feel you have to explore it and find out why. America's a commercial culture, and I suppose it's nearer a pure democracy than we are, cause if you want to vote you just put your dollar in and it counts, and there's a great deal of social mobility as a result. Over here, if you open your mouth and you come from the East End of London, or Wales, or Dorset, you're immediately stuck in a social caste. My dad would let me know that if I did anything that prejudiced his position in the town, I would really get it. I realized later it was because he's made the transition from the working class to the lower middle class . . .

STRUMMER: . . . and that's the most important thing in the world to people in that situation.

FRIPP: Exactly. I think the main difference between my generation and yours is that in the 60s it was "everything seems mad, therefore I question my senses." Now it's everything seems mad, therefore I *approve* my senses, because everything is crazy. So my lot are a bit more schizophrenic than your lot, who are a bit more down to earth and politically directed.

MUSICIAN: Is it really necessary to suffer in order to produce something worthwhile?

STRUMMER: A great man wrote about the "the lips of a poet being strangely formed," so that when he uttered cries of help people gathered around him saying "More, More, say it again!"

FRIPP: Do you have to suffer for that?

STRUMMER: Happy people don't create anything. I find creation hinges on being well-fucked-up.

FRIPP: I think we're dealing with two different things here. If you suffer it does create friction and that gives you energy, but there are some kinds of suffering that are not necessary. But then there's the kind of suffering where you put all you've got into a record, and you believe in it, but no one likes it. Then you still say I'm sorry, my name's on it, this is my work. And that creates a good energy.

MUSICIAN: Isn't there a kind of inner joy if you're suffering for the right reason?

FRIPP: If you know it's worth doing. If people are booing but you *know* it's a hell of a set, you don't give a shit who boos. But when you know you're not playing well, if you know you've copped an egg, you can't face it.

STRUMMER: Yeah, there are times when I haven't played well that I ran back to the dressing room and I wanted to . . . just . . .

FRIPP: . . . say I apologize. I'm sorry!

MUSICIAN: Okay, the right kind of suffering can produce something transcendent What about anger? Joe, you wrote in "Clampdown" that anger can be power . . .

STRUMMER: . . . Because you can either destroy things with

anger, or it can motivate you to learn about your situation and follow things through. A lot of people just thought the whole punk movement was negative, but that was just a superficial reading.

FRIPP: You don't have to use anger to destroy things. You can transform it and build something.

STRUMMER: . . . "creative violence" is the phrase we used to throw around, and that's what he's saying.

FRIPP: When I first heard about punk back in '77 I'd been waiting for six years to hear that kind of committment: to hear some geezer hit a drum as if *all he wanted to do in his life was hit a drum.* And to me it was all a great political statement. Because the movement that I'd been a part of went off course.

MUSICIAN: What went wrong?

FRIPP: It went off because a bunch of working class guys tried to move up to a middle class level of income by aping middle class traditions. Supposedly technique was important, but it became a facile technique—it wasn't real. people weren't in charge off all those endless displays of notes. They were becoming programmed, playing charts and licks, and it wasn't human.

MUSICIAN: And yet both of you get criticized by people who don't believe you can maintain your commitment and still evolve into different musical styles.

FRIPP: Yes, but when you lose your virginity there's an innocence that you're never going to recapture. But that doesn't mean you're going to give up fucking! You learn to experience your innocence in a different kind of way.

STRUMMER: Great point. Listen to what he's saying . . .

FRIPP: When you lose your virginity it doesn't matter that you don't know what you're doing because it has to do with innocence. So for me, art is the capacity to re-experience your innocence. How do you lose your virginity every time you make love? How do you do that musically every time you go on stage?

MUSICIAN: Okay, you asked the question. How do you?

FRIPP: You have to know what you want, and you have to have the wish. One night at the Marquee in 1969 King Crimson went out on a tangent,—maybe just for five minutes—and you never knew where the fuck it was, but I was telepathic—I knew everything that was going on, and what people were thinking. Because there was that energy in the room, and . . . I became a human being in such a way that . . . if that's what it means to be a human being, then *I want to become a human being!* Once you've had it, you *have* to find a way to living like that again. Otherwise there's no point in anything. And you go for it! You have to go on till you find a way to do it. And if you want it enough, you get nearer. There are a lot of techniques, disciplines, and inner and outer practices that can help make you open to that quality of experience.

MUSICIAN: What's the role of technique in all this?

FRIPP: Technique is part of what you do in order to get there. But when you're there, you really don't give a shit about technique.

STRUMMER: Right, it's a combination of innocence and expertise.

FRIPP: . . . and the more technique you have the more you throw away, and that gives you more authority. If you can only play one chord, and you play it with all you've got, that pure. If you can play 10,000 chords, but you play one that's pure, it has an authority which the others don't.

STRUMMER: As Kierkegard says, "Don't fall in the cup of wisdom that you drink from." What he's saying applies to music too. All those flurries of notes and runs are pouring in, when all you have to do is drink.

MUSICIAN: [To Strummer] That reminds me of that great line in "The Sounds of The Sinners": *Waiting for that jazz note . . .*

STRUMMER: . . . Right, *looking for the great jazz note that destroyed the walls of Jericho.* You got it. That's what we're after.

MUSICIAN: In a way, that's what I felt happened that night I saw your show at the Palladium. There was this extraordinary energy coming through—a real feeling of oneness and unity. Is that what music is capable of? Is that what you're aiming for?

STRUMMER: Well, gosh . . . I MEAN, GODDAMN, VIC, HOW MUCH WERE THE HOT DOGS THAT NIGHT? I don't know. Maybe you're asking the wrong people.

FRIPP: About finding that great jazz note: I think the Western tradition of teaching music is pretty fucked up. Because you learn all the externals, the laws of harmony, the laws of counterpoint, the laws of rhythm. But nothing about music. On the other hand, there's a tradition among the Sufis where you play only one note on the bass end of the flute for 1000 days. You can think about as many notes as you want, but you can't play them. Just that one note for 1,000 days.

MUSICIAN: If you had to put into words what it is you'd like to give people through your music, what would it be?

STRUMMER: That they feel they could start to play, too. When I was a teenager I felt that musicians were a world apart—a secret society I could never join. So I didn't bother to try until I was almost too old. I just hope it doesn't seems so impossible like it did for me watching Eric Clapton at Wembley and thinking, *I could never do that.* It's not that hard, really. Now, I'm not a born musician like maybe Robert is . . .

FRIPP: . . . not at all! I was tone deaf and had no sense of rhythm . . .

STRUMMER: . . . I got kicked out of the choir . . .

FRIPP: . . . They wouldn't even let me *join* the choir!

STRUMMER: Well, that's quite an achievement, Robert, I really enjoy and appreciate what you've done.

FRIPP: Sometimes—and this is only a theory—I think that music needs a musician to play it. That the music itself is alive, but you have to be out there to know it.

STRUMMER: I've been thinking about this recently. I find that when I write a really good song, it's a blur in my mind when I actually wrote it. I know the song exists, 'cause I can play it for my friends, but I just can't remember what happened between thinking of the idea of the song and finally playing it for my friend. Something happened that I don't remember.

MUSICIAN: That's a classic description of the creative process. The ordinary faculties are suspended in a way while something greater comes through. Is there anything you do to be more open to those moments?

STRUMMER: Every man has his own rituals to get you into the right state of consciousness. I like to have four typewriters in a row and then I feel everything is prepared.

FRIPP: I think you have to learn to listen to the music. I don't know many musicians who even listen to what they're playing—it's never automatic, you always have to make an effort to use your ears. A funny thing happened in Philadelphia a few weeks ago during my Frippertronics tour. I was listening and I heard the next note I had to play. And I played it. Then I heard the next note, and I played that one. I'd been waiting twenty-three years for that to happen . . .

STRUMMER: . . . that's *real* music . . .

FRIPP: . . . and it was the first time it ever happened to me. And I started to cry while I was playing . . .

STRUMMER: That's it. To know where it has to go . . .

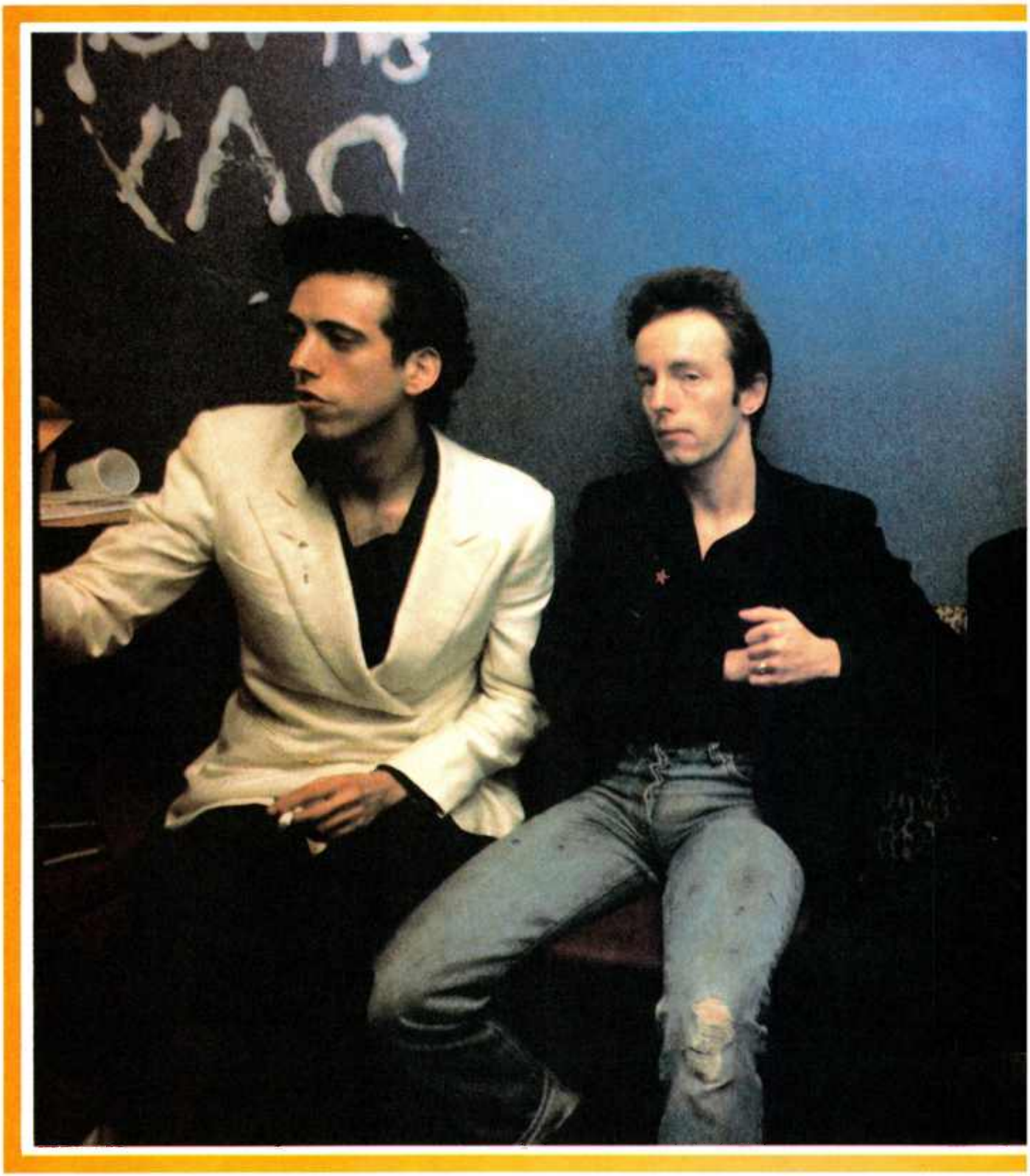
FRIPP: . . . and it's funny, but I had to trust it. I heard the next note, and I thought well, I'll try it. Then I heard the next one and thought well, this is shit, but I thought I should trust it. So I did. And it's a question of trusting the music to play itself.

STRUMMER: It's like that feeling when you're just sitting there and playing, and you're not conscious of it. You start doodling and your hands just take over and your conscious mind is no longer saying you must practice, or you must play this. Then something else tunes in and I'm playing something special. My mind's not involved, and I know I've been playing real music.

MUSICIAN: One last question: what's the most important thing you've learned about playing music over the last five years?

STRUMMER: That unless you're prepared to give your heart and soul to it completely, *forget it!*

By now The Pattern is fairly well established; four frustrated working class types form a group, woodshed, then burst forth on a wave of awesome energy and intensity. They record The Album, and as critics fall over themselves searching for The Adjective, they become The Next Big Thing. And so it was for the Clash, considered by many to be the finest rock and roll band of our times (by others merely an overrated garage band in overdrive). In the beginning they were crude, raw, politically acute, amateurish and unbelievably intense — the ideal personification of the original punk ethic. Maybe a little *too* intense for some; their American record companies delayed the release of their epo-



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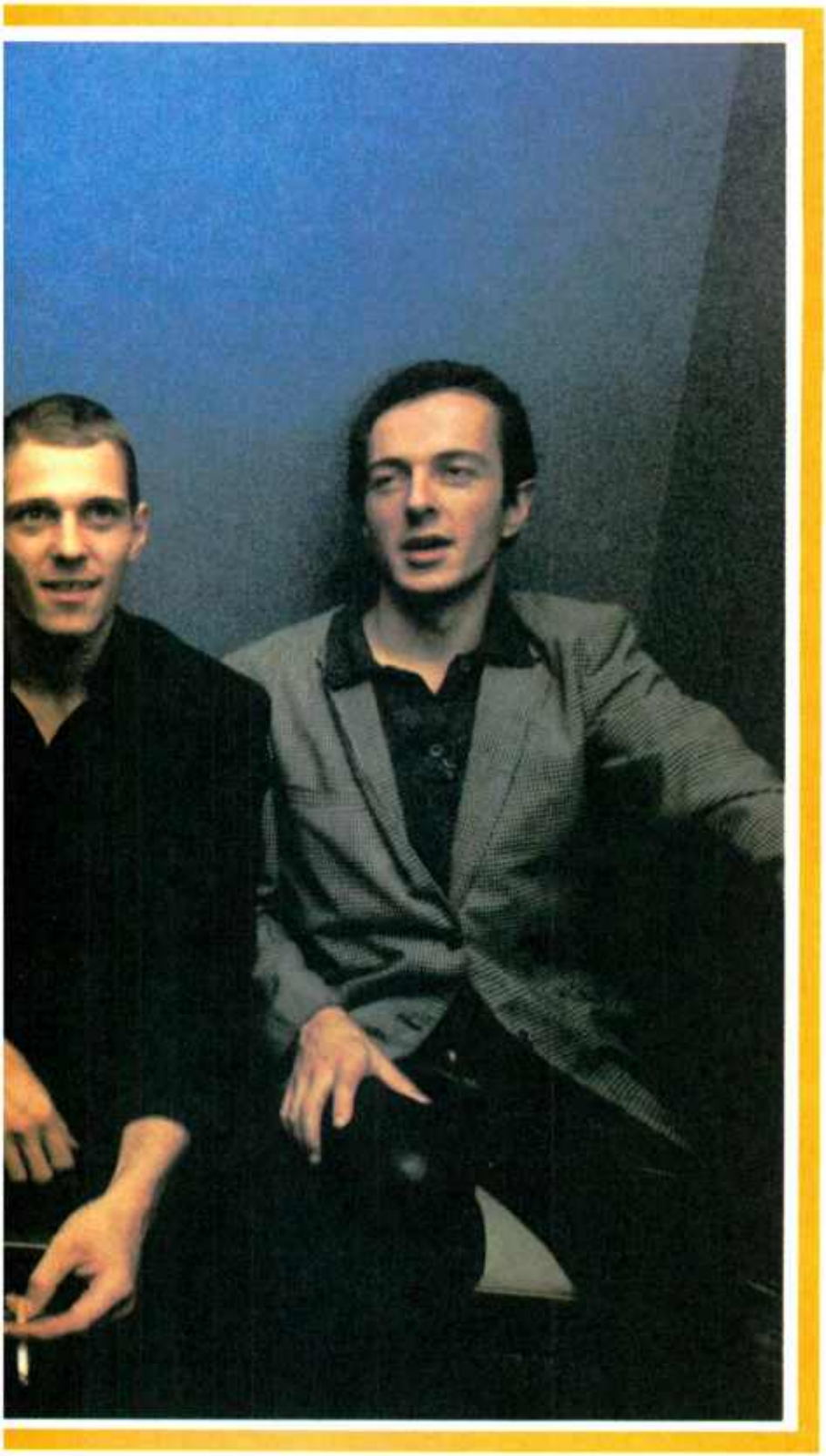
THE CLASH

nymously titled debut album for almost two years after its English release in 1977. Their second English (and first American) album, *Give 'Em Enough Rope* served up the same volatile amount of frustration, anger and hope as *The Clash*, this time buffed and shined to a gloss by American producer Sandy Pearlman.

By the summer of '79 vocalist/guitarist Joe



ROUGH BOYS

Paul Simenon and Mick Jones

By Clint Roswell

Strummer, lead guitarist Mick Jones, bassist Paul Simenon, and drummer Topper Headon had reached a crisis point familiar to all students of The Pattern. That primal burst of creative frustration that had fueled the punk explosion was fast running out of petrol, and the pack was beginning to thin out. As the initial impulse waned, the so-called new wave bands were faced with a perplexing dilemma: how could they continue to refine and develop their musical abilities without losing contact with a creative spark that had made it all worth doing in the first place? What was to prevent them from gaining the world and yet losing their souls like the art rock bands of the late 60s and early 70s, whom they so roundly detested?

In early 1980 the Clash nearly resolved this paradox with *London Calling*, an album that was both a quantum leap in sophistication, and an essential re-information of the spirit and values that had established their authority four years ago. In expanding their musical horizons, they raced freely over the entire history of rock, drawing on rockabilly, early R&B, jazz, folk music, and reggae—and even coming up with a hit single with "Train in Vain." Predictably, fickle British critics staged a white riot of their own, lambasting the album and the group for what they chose to construe as a sellout to the American market. But any doubts about the Clash's continuing vitality were settled by their third American tour. Onstage at New York's Palladium, the Clash was a literally stunning experience for many, roughly equivalent to meeting a runaway locomotive head on, or kissing a lightning bolt. How do they do it? What's the secret? If there's been one consistent, crucial factor in the Clash's attitude and approach of the last five years, it's been their unyielding sense of commitment—to their music, their public, and to their own sense of integrity. For this band, that is truly the tie that binds. It holds them together and sustains their will, creativity, and essential identity, regardless of whatever outward transformations the band may undergo. It keeps them awake, alive, and honest, and provides them with the determination to withstand the continuing backlash launched by the English press against their latest

release, *Sandinista!,* a three-record set consisting primarily of dubbing, reggae tunes, orchestrated ballads, and other esoterica, *Sandinista!* is a further departure from punk orthodoxy, and as such really has the English press up in arms.

"It's amazing, isn't it, all the bad press we've gotten in England," acknowledged Jones, the 25-year-old guitar-wielding rebel who founded the group in 1977. "We have been accused of selling out to the Americans, which is so untrue . . . our songs deal with England, the U.S.A., South America, Russia, China. England has turned against the Clash because a prophet is never welcome in his own hometown. We've come up with a pretty high prophecy quotient and they can't stand us for it, as if we're above it all."

But there is substance to their music that goes beyond the mouthing of juvenile anthems. They are punk without pretension. There is energy without hype. They are direct without being simple. The Clash are trying to get a message across, even if sounds sometimes as bracing as a slap in the face. They want to wake us up to the rhythms of the age.

Jones was an art student going nowhere six years ago, hoping to form a band when he met bassist Simenon at a rehearsal in which future PiL guitarist Keith Levene was also playing. Simenon tried out as a singer but couldn't hit a note, and he didn't fare much better on the bass. But Jones took one look at the gawky skinhead who was raised, like Jones, in the trenches of lower-Brixton, and invited Paul to join the band.

"I grew up listening to reggae on a jukebox in my neighborhood where you could only hear the bass lines," recalled Simenon. "I think it was probably true that I wasn't a good musician at first.

"But I think that playing along to reggae records really helped me and now I feel very active on the bass. I've been working on reggae and dub with a fretless bass that gives me the feel I want. I think each of us contributes another dimension to the band."

It was Simenon who named the group the Clash, saying it was the one word he read most in the newspaper. "The Clash have always been different because no one has our outlook. We're neither left nor right, but we sing of the oppressed because that's who and what we are. Our music's about politics, sure, but it's spelled with a small 'p.' We're much more interested in making a social statement that will make people aware of what's going on.

"I know we've been criticized for doing reggae, but it's a very flexible musical form which allows us the freedom to mesh with other styles. People say white blokes can't do reggae, but that's a lot of shit. We grew up in Brixton, all the people I knew were black, we shared the same common experience. I didn't discover reggae in a book, I grew up with it. It's part of me. A lot of black people and Jamaicans get mad at us because we do it better than they do.

It was Junior Mervin's "Police And Thieves" that brought the Clash instant popularity as a fledgling club band. They played their first gig opening for the Sex Pistols, but it was "White Riot," delivered by a ferocious-looking singer named Joe Strummer, who had come over to the Clash from 101ers, that rocked the boat. That driving indictment of establishment rock became an anthem for the British punk movement, which now had a political conscience in the Clash.

The Clash created their own chaos wherever they went. They still are subject to their own inability or reluctance to deal with the outside world. Management problems have followed the band, partially due to their uncompromising distaste for record company business and their tightly-wrapped egos.

"We're just unmanageable," says Simenon, a 25-year-old matinee idol with blond hair framing a sculptured face. "We've always like the managers we had, but the four of us are liable to do four different things when a manager tells us something. I don't know what it is about the situation.

"Maybe the tipoff came early after we had just signed with CBS Records and were coming back to London after a tour. A limousine was waiting to take us to the studio. A van for our equipment pulled up behind it. We all looked at each other, threw the baggage in the limo and got in the van. Something like a limousine has always been held up to ridicule by anyone who is poor or who comes from a neighborhood where you see only fat politicians inside."

The Clash have retained the lean and hungry look over the years because they have not fallen prey to the trappings of commercial success. Joe Strummer, the singer and prolific lyricist, sets the example. He has recently taken to squatting in his attempt to take up residence in overcrowded London, a major reason whey the band has not toured for months after the January release of *Sandinista!*

And although the band has five albums out, including three released in 1980 which contain 63 songs, the group has deferred the usual quantum leap in social status afforded rock stars for the cold comforts of still remaining within spitting distance of the street.

That doesn't mean, however, that musically the Clash has remained a three-chord garage band. Quite the contrary; they have invested all their money into studio equipment and have undertaken individual projects, including film. The most active has been Jones, the lead guitarist, who has become an accomplished producer. He has worked with England's Theatre Of Hate, plus former boyhood idol, Ian Hunter of Mott The Hoople, and most notably, singer and steady, Ellen Foley, as well as all the Clash albums.

"People think the Clash can't write love songs," says Jones, who returned to Foley's West Side apartment bearing flowers and three hours late for dinner. "Working with Ellen give us a chance to do stuff we regularly don't do for the Clash. It worked out well all around, letting us expand our range a little."

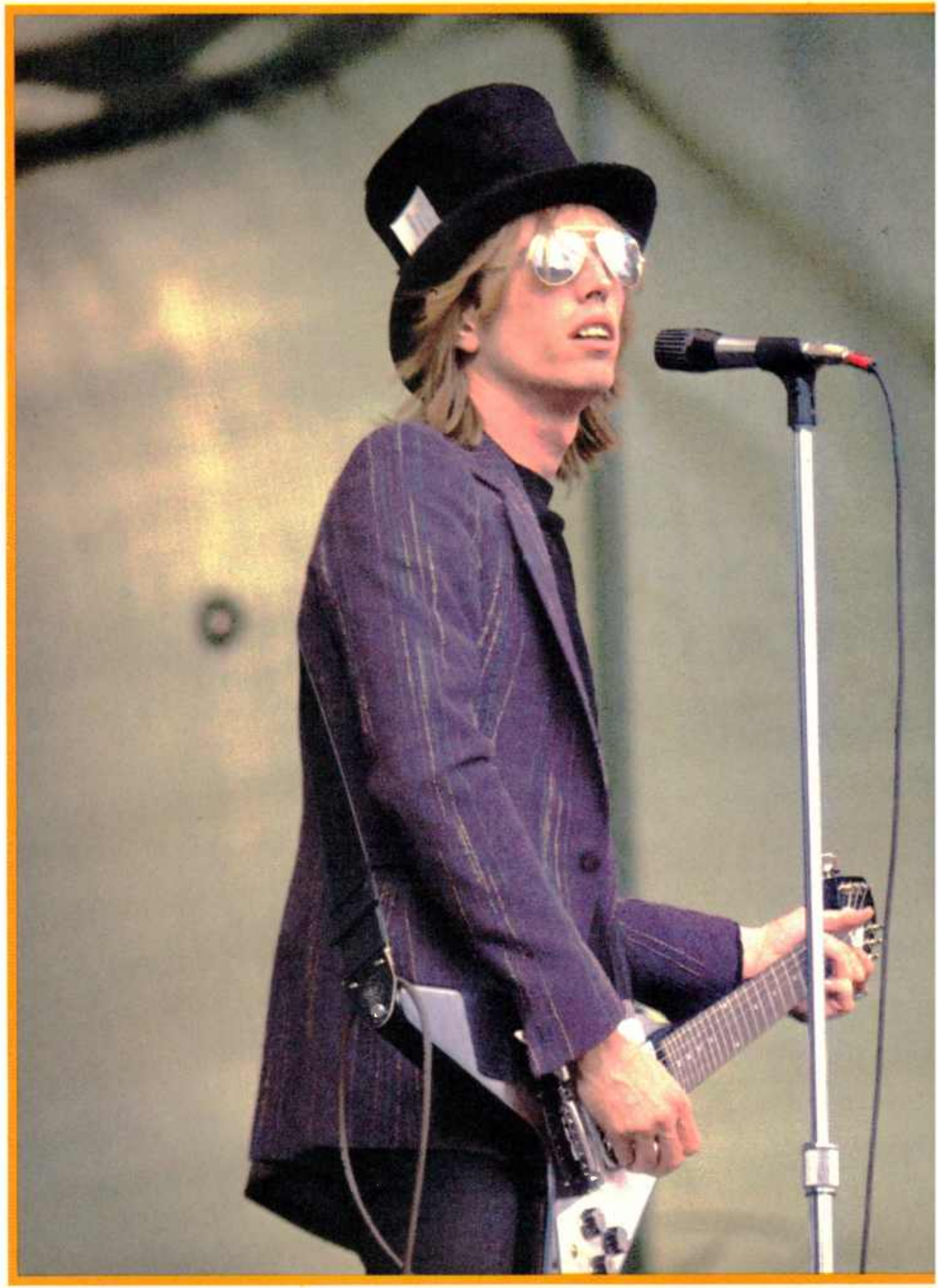
But it's the combined efforts of the four musicians that make up the Clash that give meaning and direction to their lives. "It's something we all realize is very powerful and keeps us in tune with our viewpoints," says Simenon, an admitted insomniac, who has been handling the group's management and legal duties lately.

It is precisely this lack of prurient interest that keeps the band fresh and open to new ideas. Despite being the musical force whose thrashings ignited the politics of punk, they have defied classification as a musical band recognized as one of the most potent of its era. It is the diversity of styles, the strident lyrics of Strummer, and the understated power of their reggae-pushed backbeat that makes the Clash unique while still remaining true to its musical direction. It is a derivative band which has synthesized past musical formats into a new approach.

It is also their willingness to experiment with different musical concepts and incorporate them into galvanizing social anthems that keeps the Clash a step ahead of predictability. This is most evident on *Sandinista!*, titled after the Nicaraguan revolutionaries who successfully toppled the Somoza regime in 1979. There is barely a mention of Sandinista in this album, as will be explained later by Jones, but the music has a subliminal militant feel, summoned up by a pervasive dance beat which lends itself to the political fervor of Strummer's lyrics. Songs from the rap-inspired, "The Magnificent Seven," to the freewheeling calypso of "Let's Go Crazy" and the searing militancy of "One More Time" to the sinewy reggae rhythm of "The Crooked Beat" are traversed with commanding expertise by the Clash.

"We may fool everybody and do a straight rock album the next time out," says Simenon, 'but the first rule about punk is that there are no rules. We just want to keep moving forward all the time."

The Clash are calling out the music world. They have played their rebel hand to the fast and furious, and now believe *Sandinista!* is the ace in the hole that throws the cultism off their backs.



TOM PETTY

Returned from legal purgatory and a vocal meltdown, the Gainesville gunfighter talks about the life and times of the band-next-door, critical chic, the corporate shaft, Hard Promises and cold facts.

By Dave Marsh

When Tom Petty burst into his manager's Sunset Blvd. offices early this April he was exuberant. No wonder. He'd just finished mixing and mastering his fourth and most mature album, *Hard Promises*, and the sessions had gone off without a hitch — indeed, much of the album had been recorded using completely live takes. (MCA had almost managed to create a crisis by announcing plans to release the new Petty album at a $9.98 list price. But Petty politicked judiciously in the media — at one point threatening to make the LP title *Eight Ninety Eight* — and his desire for a more affordable price prevailed.)

Hard Promises is not a breakthrough record, as *Damn the Torpedoes* was. But it presents everything that the Heartbreakers can do well in quantity, and Petty's writing has grown enormously. Emblematically, *Hard Promises* is the first T.P. record to contain a lyric sheet, which Petty says was a concession to lovine, but which also reflects his new confidence in what he has to say, and his ability to say it well.

But mostly Petty is in good spirits because he is finally getting the recognition he's wanted. Although some of the band's trendier (new wave-ish) fans spurned them after the commercial ascendance of *Torpedoes*, Petty has found his voice and his public; he's a much more confident person now than he was when *Torpedoes* was released 18 months ago.

Back in the fall of 1979, Tom Petty's life was chaos — bits and pieces of rock and roll fallout. Although his third and best album, *Damn the Torpedoes*, was well on its way to putting Petty and the Heartbreakers on the world's multi-platinum map (sales to date: 2.4 million copies), the blonde Floridian was bouncing from one crisis to another.

Torpedoes had been completed only after the settlement of a legal dispute among Petty, manager Denny Cordell and his Shelter Records, and MCA Records (which had become Shelter's distributor by buying out ABC a few months earlier). Petty wasn't happy about suddenly winding up on MCA without having had any say in the matter. He claimed his contract made no provision for his assignment to a new label in such circumstances and he wanted out. MCA promptly sued for breach of contract and all hell broke loose. The situation was eventually resolved by Petty severing all ties with Cordell, and taking on Elliott Roberts' Lookout Management, and moving from Shelter to Danny Bramson's Backstreet label, also distributed by MCA. But the legal battle had been bizarre in its complexity — incredibly, both Petty and MCA were repre-

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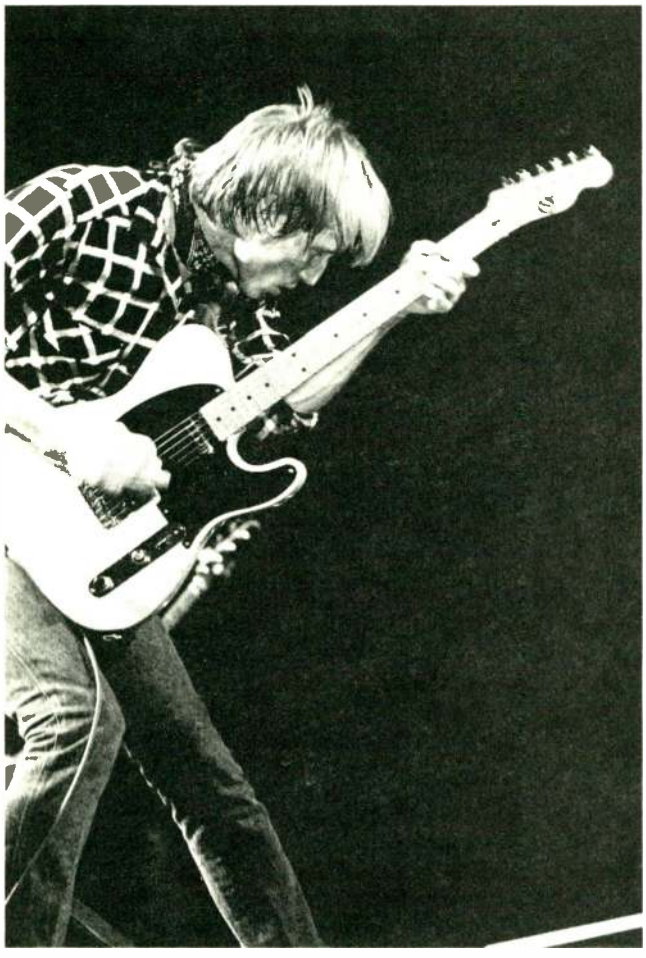

EBET ROBERTS

ented by members of the same law firm (that's rock and roll . . .)—and exhausting in its intensity. At one point, only some judicious advice from co-producer Jimmy Iovine prevented Tom from walking out on his own session.

Then, with *Torpedoes* on the shelves and its first single, "Don't Do Me Like That," bulleting to the Top 5, and the band finally off on a full scale U.S. and European tour, Petty was stricken by a severe sore throat. He was rushed back to L.A., tonsillitis was diagnosed and after the resulting tonsillectomy, he was flat on his back for two weeks, unable to speak, much less sing.

When he *can* speak, Petty is surprisingly articulate, peppering every statement with asides, dialects, and drawn out internal narrative and dialogue. During the interview, however, he frequently defended himself from a critical stereotype and drove home a simple but surprisingly direct message: *we're not dumb.* I'm not sure what has led so many critics to take Petty more lightly than he deserves, whether it's the band's good-time reputation, the occasional incoherence of their interviews, or the fact that *Torpedoes*, such a crucial album, seems conceptually unfinished (probably a product of the legal turmoil). Maybe it's that the band is Southern or that Petty's classic rock and roll good looks (which escape All-American stature only by virtue of the traditional rocker's big nose) turn "serious" minds away from him and his work.

In the past, Petty has written mostly love songs, or at least, songs about one kind of romance or another: "American Girl," "Listen to Her Heart," "Breakdown," "Refugee," "Only the Losers" and "Don't Do Me Like That" all have this in common. On the new record, he branches out, fleshing out characters and narratives in songs like "Something Big," "The Night Watchman" and the sardonic "King's Road."

Musically, the record is more reflective—not exactly laid back, but from time to time ("Letting You Go") the kind of white soul Eric Clapton has been trying to perfect for the past few years. Lyrically, the record lives up to its title: so much so that even the album's most ferocious rocker, "Thing About You," begins with a cautionary couplet: "*I'm not much on mystery/ You gotta be careful what you dream.*"

Petty still sounds like Roger McGuinn with street smarts; chiming twelve-string guitars, Dylanesque organ and Stonesian rhythms dominate the mix. In fact, the album's first single, "The Waiting," is easily the most Byrdsian effort the Heartbreakers have served up since "American Girl" (which was so avuncular that McGuinn himself felt obliged to cover it). Jimmy Iovine's iron-fist-in-a-velvet-glove production that made *Damn the Torpedoes* such a departure from Petty's earlier work is also employed on *Hard Promises* Iovine brightens and toughens the band's sound, providing polish and punch. *Hard Promises* is as seamless as the best abums of his mentors. The songs are diversely styled but, more than anything, they sound like the work of one man, one group. For Petty and the Heartbreakers, this unity is the most important breakthrough of all.

Meanwhile, Petty and keyboardist Benmont Tench have been working with Iovine on Stevie Nicks' solo album. Nicks turns in a gorgeous duet with Petty on *Hard Promises* a folk-rock ballad called "The Insider." Petty also contributed a song to her record, "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," originally written and recorded for the new Heartbreakers LP. Nicks and Petty's duet singing goes completely over the top into rock and roll heaven on this one.

All of this perhaps explains Petty's ebullience when he arrived that afternoon for this interview. That, and the fact that he had just retured from the Nike shop in Westwood; loaded down with free goods.

"They'd seen that we wear their wrestling shoes, I guess," he told me. "So they said we could come over and get some stuff for free." Petty laughed. "When we got there they just started piling stuff on us: 'Oh, I like that one.' 'Great, what size would you like?' After we had more than I could carry, they said, 'Don't forget, we've still gotta go over to the sportswear.' Then, when we were all finished, they looked at this enormous pile and said, 'We better give you something to carry it all in,' and brought out these huge leather equipment bags."

He shakes his head in disbelief. "You know," he says in his soft Florida drawl, "when you're broke, nobody gives you nothin'—*nothin'*. But as soon as you can afford it, it's 'Sure, go ahead, take whatever you want.' It's ab-so-lutely backwards." He laughed again, a little more tight-lipped this time. And after some brief chat about Elvis (I'd just been to Graceland and brought him a souvenir Graceland cigarette lighter), the conversation began. This is how it went:

MUSICIAN: When you went into the studio to do *Hard Promises* was there a particular concept you were looking for?

PETTY: I wanted the songs to have a little more depth, I guess. The only concept was to try and do some things we'd never done before. I didn't want to do all 12 strings and organ again. It's changed quite a bit, if you listen from the first record until now.

MUSICIAN: How close are those early records to what you were looking for, or what the band sounded like?

PETTY: The first record is probably right on the money, because when we did it, we'd only been a band for a week or so. By the end, that album was a real curiosity. "Oh, this is what it is. How weird." I remember taking it around to people and they'd just go: "What is it?" Especially at ABC Records. It was like, "We're not really sure what it is. This must be punk rock."

It was all because they'd look at the cover and they saw I had a black leather jacket on. Which wasn't abnormal to us, to wear black leather jackets. And they'd say, "Well the songs are kinda short." One time, they said don't you think you should go back and add on another verse to all the songs and make 'em a little longer? It took a little while for people to understand it. It was real frustrating.

You gotta remember that in 1976, they had lost all consciousness of that stuff. The only real rock bands then were bands that played a lotta long guitar solos. I guess a heavy metal band was thought of as a hard rock band. So it was a little bit confusing.

On the second album, I don't think I did what I wanted to do at all. It hasn't ever been one of my favorite records. A lotta people like it, but I made it in such a hurry and I was in a bad state of mind.

MUSICIAN: Was that when the creative problem with your management and record company began to come up?

PETTY: It started to, a little bit. That was when it first started dawning on me that you can't let the industry push you around as much as it will. You have to remember, we didn't know how to deal with a record company or anything. We just thought, we make the record, we give it to you and it's a hit or it isn't. It had been a year, and then off the first album, "Breakdown," went into the Top 40. This was as we were starting the second album, and they were saying, "Get it done, get it done." Cordell wasn't like that; Shelter wasn't like that, but ABC, which was really the record company, was.

We'd never really done a tour like we were doing then and we were just kinda nuts. In those days, I think, we'd just discovered cocaine or just come to a point where we could really afford it. It just caused a lot of friction and disorientation; we were more caught up with puttin' another line out and talkin' about what we were doin' than doing it. So we got through that; no real *Enquirer* stuff there, it was just disorientation.

But those first two records—I still like the first one a lot when I hear it on the radio. I just like it because it's such an oddity to me, it's such an unusual sounding record. We made 'em in this studio that was like this room. (About 15" × 15".) It was good for us in a way because we saw that all this technology is just a bunch of crap. All we did was take over the office. We went to Tulsa, took all the stuff out, drove it back, built a wall, put the glass in and rolled all the equipment in. I remember, we made the first album and didn't know how to put tones on the tape, or that any such thing existed. "Tones? No, the music's on there,

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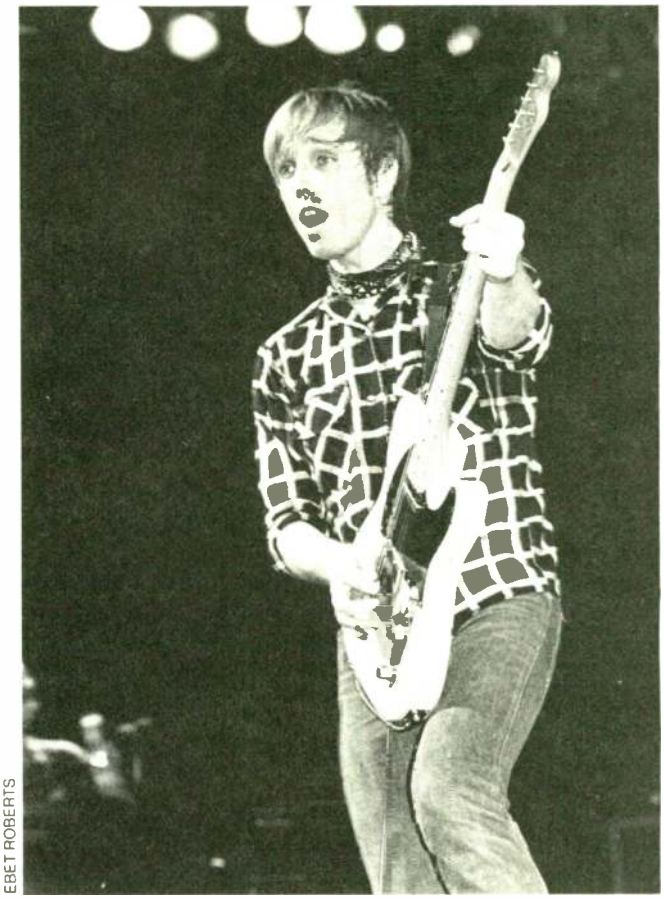

EBET ROBERTS

no tones." It was funny.

MUSICIAN: The new record was mostly cut live?

PETTY: Maybe ninety per cent of it is live—vocals and everything. At least eight out of ten vocals are. I overdubbed half of the "Something Big" vocal, because it was too noisy; you couldn't understand it. But I did keep half.

MUSICIAN: That's interesting, because the most notable difference between *Hard Promises* and *Torpedoes* is the growth in your singing—it's a lot more confident.

PETTY: In the past, I'd always been afraid. The one thing that I don't like about the second album is that the vocals are so buried, and so back on a lotta the tracks. I was afraid to put my voice up really loud, and I could always back it up: "Well, I got the Kinks records, and I can't hear the vocals on those, and I love those records." Then, with *Torpedoes* Jimmy Iovine came in and just started: "You gotta get the vocals up, you gotta hear the singing."

I remember something Leon Russell told me once, and it's true. He was mixing a record, and he did one take of the vocal and he put it on. I said, "That's all you do is one take?" He said, "Yeah. I do one take and I put it up real loud. I'll tell ya something, Tom, if you sing as bad as me and you *don't* put the vocal right up front, everybody's gonna think you're trying to hide something. But if you put it right up front, they'll listen to it and think it's neat." That made a lot of sense to me, cause I never thought of myself as a great singer.

Before this band, I'd never gone on stage and sang a whole show; I'd sing some of the songs, but I never sang a whole show. Now, after that last tour, singing is real second nature. So on the album, the only time we really got into vocals was when we started trying to beat the live ones. And I'd start singing and I'd say, "Wow, I just don't like it as much as I like what's on the tape." So finally we just abandoned that approach.

MUSICIAN: On *Torpedoes*, both "Louisiana Rain" and "Don't Do Me Like That" were four or five years old. That made the record much more scattered thematically. Did that have anything to

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do with the legal situation you were in at the time?

PETTY: Yeah. I think it's amazing we made an album at all during that time. I've said before, I could write a book about it, but why in hell would you wanna read it? It was such misery, and so much a case of: "Your Honor, what's *happening?* Why are they doing this to me? I've done nothing but play in a band. For God's sake, *what* is going on?" And it got into those amazing trips of you can't record, yes you can record; you can't play on the road, okay, yes, you can for a week and then you've gotta stop.

We'd be working in the studio and then they'd say, "You gotta look out for the marshals, the marshals are gonna come in tonight and grab the tapes." It got to where poor Bugs (the Heartbreakers' chief roadie) was just carrying all these tapes around in his car, and moving 'em, so I could honestly say, "I don't know where the tapes are," while I was on the stand. 'Cause these guys would have released the album in whatever condition it was in.

It got to where the judge came into the studio and they got out all the tapes and they had to make legal arguments as to what is a record and what isn't a record—is this finished? I was kinda just sittin' there mute, listenin' to these guys discuss whether it was done. It was totally ridiculous.

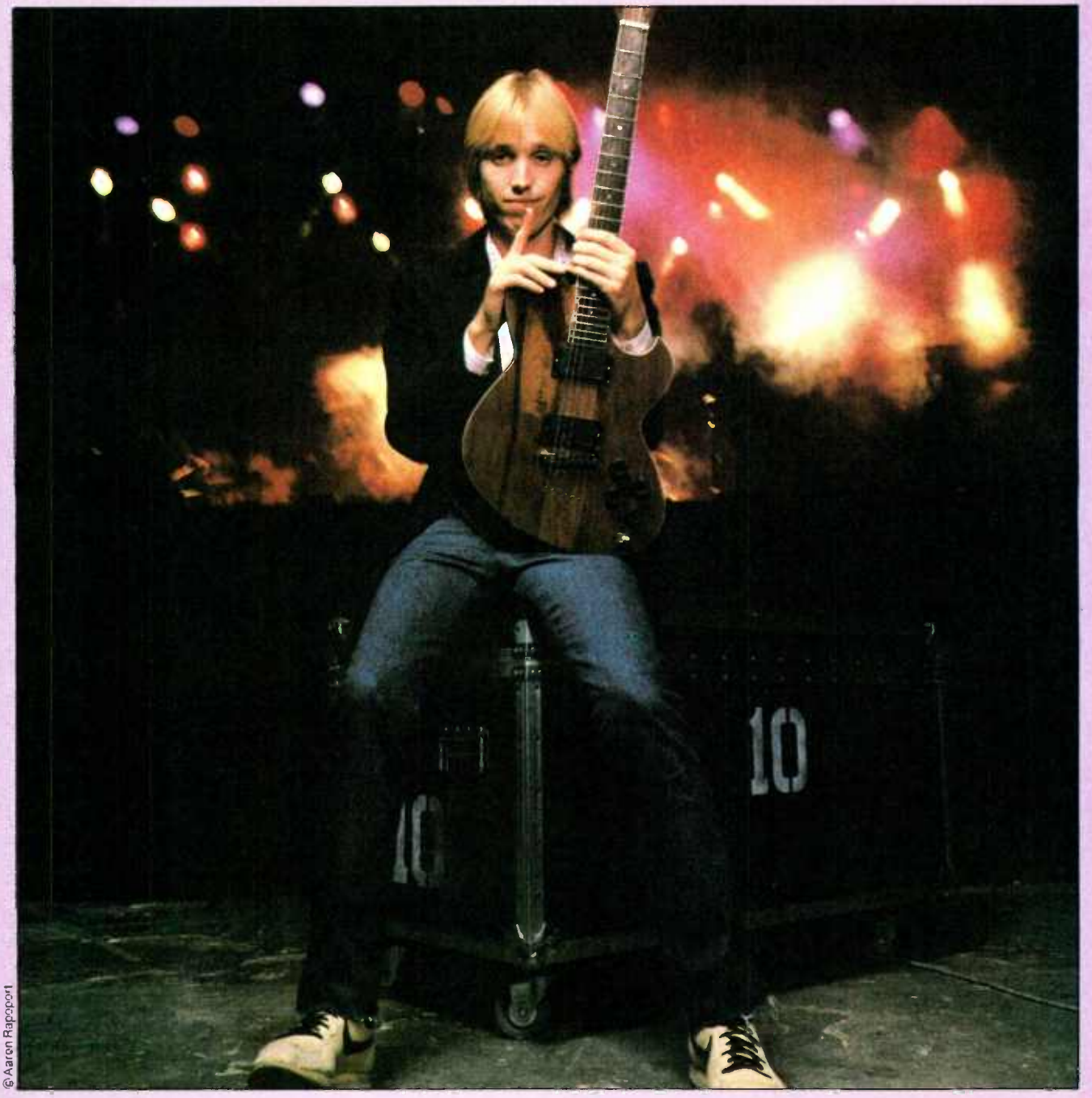
MUSICIAN: What made you fight so hard?

PETTY: I knew it was the end, if I didn't fight it. I knew what would happen to us if I didn't. It would have been the end. Because we never would have gotten enough money to survive as a band, because we were all totally broke.

MUSICIAN: Most people would use that lack of money as an excuse not to fight a large company.

PETTY: We didn't have the money, really. But I been poor all my life. I can honestly say (laughs) it's hard to find anybody been poorer than I have. I remember telling the lawyers for the other side, "Screw you. I will go to Florida; I'll sell peanuts if I have to. But I will NEVER give you this goddamned record. At least I'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you want this and you'll never get it."

On the other hand, when we did work, we had this vengeance. I don't think there'll ever be a feeling like when that rec-



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ord was a hit. It was such total victory. And it cost a fortune but we paid it all back, and as of today, we don't owe anybody any money.

MUSICIAN: How did you get in such a mess, anyway?

PETTY: We were just a band that hardly knew who they were in the first place. We'd been so confused; every hustler in Hollywood had come through. I don't know, they all thought we could make 'em money or somethin'. We were just playing the Whisky, that was about the only steady gig we had, and everybody in the world was coming in. Then the first album did real well in England and after that, it was really insane. We were always confused as to what we were supposed to do.

Then that bankruptcy thing came in. We had to go to bankruptcy court, but we were never bankrupt. If we had been it would have been an ideal situation, because once you're bankrupt, no contracts are binding. But once people put that tag on you—whew, everybody's gone. I have to give our producer Jimmy Iovine a lot of credit, just for moral support. He was one of the only people that would call me up, every day, and say, "We're gonna beat 'em, we're gonna do it, we're gonna make this record no matter what happens, and listen to it ourselves." For a good year this went on. A lot of people still don't understand the scope of what was going on. Like, we had offers from record companies before *Damn the Torpedoes* that were *staggering*. I mean, it was so much money that I would say, "I just don't believe that at all. I don't wanna hear that." Literally every record company was at the door, saying, "If you can get free, we're gonna take care of you."

So that was hanging over our heads, and I knew, if I lost, we were trapped—they were never gonna promote the records or even buy ads. So I said, "What's the point of making the records if no one's gonna hear 'em?" It really got down to an issue of self-respect—I refused to be bullied by those guys.

It really gave me a lot of faith in the country when we won. I don't see too many countries where you could go to court and say, "Your Honor, I have a little band here and these guys have come in and done this to me, and I would like to get out of it. What do you think? I'll give all the money back, and everything. I

just want out. I quit." And they took me dead serious. I gave the judge a platinum record.

MUSICIAN: The funny thing is that all that sense of triumph came out on the last record. It's as if, on *Torpedoes*, all you could see was how much there was to win. On *Promises*, what you see is how much there is to lose. Is this your response to success?

PETTY: I don't know if I'm ready to respond to success. Because I still don't feel like I've done everything I'm gonna do, and I don't know what else to do, and life's a drag because we're rich. But I'm really enjoying having money, to tell you the truth.

With our public image, I've always felt—and it's our fault in a way—I've always felt that we looked a little dumber than we are, to the public. With this record, I felt, we'd gone through so much and seen so much, and there's so much to this—we can't play dumb and make another record of teenage love songs.

There's a lotta pain to it, and you don't really want to dwell on that, because I think it's hard for the audience to understand that there is. When they look at it, they see, "Hell, he don't pump gas all goddamned day. He don't even have to worry about the rent." And I can relate to that, because I've felt the same way. "You tell me it's bad. Screw you, I'll tell you about bad."

MUSICIAN: So what does having a Number One album feel like?

PETTY: It only got to Number Two. It made me hate Pink Floyd. (Laughs) I'll tell you something, no matter what anybody ever tells you, life is never sweeter than when you have a hit record. I mean, it is a *sweet* goddamn feeling. It felt great, especially after all that. It was really the only time in my life I felt like justice was *done*. "TP, we're gonna let you have it your way today." (Laughs, harder) It was hard not to just get gushy about the whole thing. And that's why I wanted this record to be quality.

MUSICIAN: That vigilance is sort of the message of a lot of these songs, especially "The Insider" and "The Night Watchman."

PETTY: "The Night Watchman" actually started as a joke on the whole thing of security, I have a guard on my house now, a guy who sits outside the door and keeps people back. So I wrote a song for him. It got so amusing to me. "You mean, there's gonna be a GUY outside the DOOR—all the time?" I went as long as I could without doing it. For a long time, I just said, "No, I will NOT do that." And then it got where, yeah, I'm gonna do it now, because I don't want people standing in the middle of my living room. And worse.

MUSICIAN: On stage, you've always been real careful about keeping your distance, and very concerned that the audience doesn't take you out of proportion.

PETTY: It dawned on me—I think it was in '78—about the audience. We had only been playing big rooms a little while and we went into Winterland. I think Bruce (Springsteen) had been there two nights before, and he built a lower stage across the front and it was still there. We weren't using it because the kids had all their jackets and everything piled up. So by the end of the night, I was just getting a little bit playful and went out, jumped down, just leaned over the crowd. At the time, we thought they'd gotten me by the hand, but on the videotape you can see they get me almost by the waist. And take me into the audience and try to kill me.

MUSICIAN: What?

PETTY: I mean, they were gonna take my life. It was very violent—they were all gonna take a finger and a leg. On the tape, I have on a real heavy vest and they ripped that, my whole shirt went, I had a neckerchief tied real tight around my neck and on the tape, it's hanging down to my chest because it had been so pulled and twisted. I lost handfuls of hair and my whole lip was busted. It was this weird sensation of falling and never hitting the ground and people diving in. They're crazy people when they're that worked up.

I remember it was that night when dawned on us: We *can't* go down there. I didn't intend to go down there in the first place, but it was like, hey, watch it, if they get ahold of you. They'll just get you down . . . it took a *lotta* guys to get me out.

MUSICIAN: I remember, you kind of stepped back from the edge at the No Nukes show, during "Cry to Me." I thought you were really going to give Springsteen a run for his money. But you didn't get closer, and I wondered why.

PETTY: I'm just amazed that I finished the set that night. I was so . . . it wasn't my favorite show, I'll tell ya. It was our first time in an arena that size, and we hadn't played in a year—that was the first gig after the lawsuit. We flew in for two days, rehearsed, and went to play with Elvis in Memphis—or that's what I called it. And we didn't have our gear; it was Bruce's birthday; didn't have our monitors. Nothing. I got out, couldn't hear my voice and couldn't get anybody to get the volume up. I was so nervous. The audience was very kind, I thought.

When we were going up, I remember Jackson Browne said, "Well listen, now, if you think they're booing you, they're not. They're just saying 'Broooce.' " I said, "Well, what the hell is the difference?"

MUSICIAN: How did you wind up on that bill?

PETTY: Danny Goldberg came in and kept hounding us. We believed that it was a good idea and we were free, we'd just won our case. We said, "Great, little celebration, trip to New York, No Nukes, okay." Doing that show was an experience, but not in the way that we were counting on. I didn't really feel good about it.

MUSICIAN: Why did you decide not to be in the *No Nukes* movie?

PETTY: It was very simple. And I'll tell ya, I've always been just a little put out at the way they responded. Because when we were asked to go, it was like "Oh, and we're gonna make a movie. (Real fast) You don't have to be in it, if you don't want to." We said, "We don't know about no movies." They said, "No you don't have to be in the movie; you don't even have to be on the record. You can just play."

So when we were on the road in New York, we went in to mix the record. The record wasn't—I have a version of "Cry to Me" recorded later that is *so* much better; I didn't like it that much and one of the guitars was buzzing for the first half of the song. I said to Jimmy, "I don't know." But he said, "Come on, we said we'd give 'em the track," So I said, "Okay, it's a good cause. We'll give 'em one song."

Then I went down to see the movie. I never felt good about the show, and I didn't like the movie. I didn't like us *at all*. I mean, what I saw of us, was really terrible. And these guys were sayin', "Naw, it's great. We love it! We got to have it. I'll just DIE if it's not in the movie." I said, "You told me I didn't have to be in the movie. Up front. I don't understand: I don't wanna be in the movie and I don't think it's gonna matter if I'm in the movie." I mean, I never saw anybody advertised but Bruce and Jackson anyway. "I don't think it's gonna hurt your cause or you're gonna make any less money. We messed up; it's not any good." And it *wasn't* any good; it wasn't even representative of a normal night.

Later on, I keep reading in the press little weird statements about it. I read a statement where Graham Nash said something about: "Well, I didn't like my performance either, but I put it in the movie. And I think there are more important things than worrying about how cool you look." I said, well, screw you, man. You think that's more important than this kid paying his money because Tom Petty's in the movie, and he sees it and he's NO GOOD? No way. I'm all for supporting causes and that, but I think that the performance should be good or it's all a bunch of crap. And I don't think I was unreasonable about it.

I'll tell you another thing: If we had said, up front, whatever happens, we'll be in the movie, we would've done it. But we went out of our way to make sure we didn't have to, because it was such a risky deal, with no rehearsal in a year and playing Madison Square Garden.

MUSICIAN: How have you adjusted to playing arenas?

PETTY: I think we're one of the only groups that is really good

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in big halls. I'll tell you what it is about big halls, the band itself has so much more responsibility, just in making the audience comfortable and having the vibe nice, cohesive, where you can go in, sit down and enjoy the show. It's just such a weird thing to sit with 18,000 people and watch a rock show. And there's a lot of trouble to see that everybody can see, everybody can hear properly and everybody can get in and get to their seat without waiting for nineteen days before it starts. And the list goes on and on.

To the band, it's even easier than playing a 3,000 seater in some ways because it's so infinite. It's all just black, bobbing heads as far as you can see. You don't really feel the pressure of those guys on the back, and at the sides. I forget about that; I play to the floor, mostly, and those are the only people I see.

But in a 3,000 seater, you can see every cat there. There ain't no place to hide.

MUSICIAN: What exactly happened with your throat?

PETTY: My tonsils were just severely infected. The first six weeks of that *Torpedoes* tour, every night was just a whole day of not smoking, not talking, getting a shot, a million teas, doctors at gigs and this terrible feeling of "Is he gonna play or isn't he?" Where I really damaged it was in Philadelphia; if I had stopped for two weeks that night, it might not have been such a serious thing. But on sheer soul I said no, we're gonna do it. It did work and it was amazing.

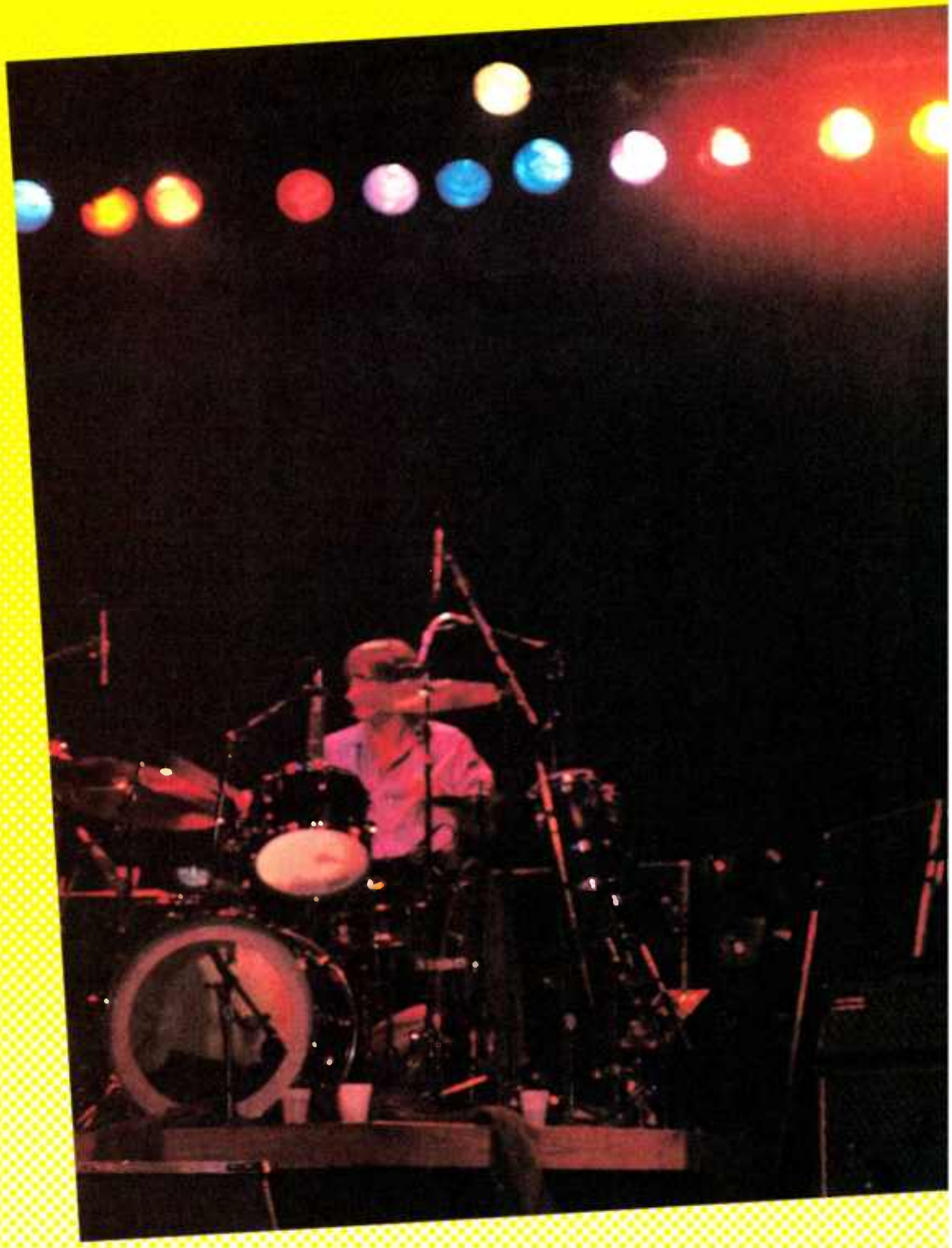
So they took my tonsils out. I couldn't speak for two weeks, but three weeks after the operation I was on stage again, in England, and I've never had any trouble since. But now any time I have a sore throat I get a real scary feeling. Actually, Jimmy (Iovine) thinks that my voice got a little better in the lower register, but that could be the machinations of a sick mind.

MUSICIAN: How did you happen to give Stevie Nicks "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" for her solo album? And aside from the fact that Iovine produces both of you, how did you wind up singing a duet on "The Insider" on your album?

PETTY: It's funny, you get such preconceived ideas about artists. I knew Stevie, but not real well, and she'd been asking me for a long time for a song. I thought that "The Insider" would be the thing for her, because it's acoustic, it has that kind of feel. She really liked the song, so we went to do the vocal and she started to sing harmony every time. My track was playing in her headphones as a guide. So she said, "Just let me sing the harmony one time." So she did, and when it was over, I just sat there, in awe. She walked back in and said, "How was it?" I said, "It's a-*maz*ing." She said, "I can tell by the look on your face, you don't wanna give me this song. I'm giving it back to you right now." I really thought a lot of her for that.

Then I went through this terrible guilt. Jimmy and I thought, we can't take it back, because we promised it to her. So we went to her and said, "Stevie, what if we trade you another song for 'Insider?" She said, play it for me, and we played her "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around." She says, "Wow! That's why I wanted *you* to write me a song—it's rock'n'roll, that's what you do. 'The Insider' sounds like what I do." And I thought, how dumb of me, to think that she'd want me to write like her.

MUSICIAN: One of the interesting things about your records is



that you're very aware of your sources, back to Elvis or so.

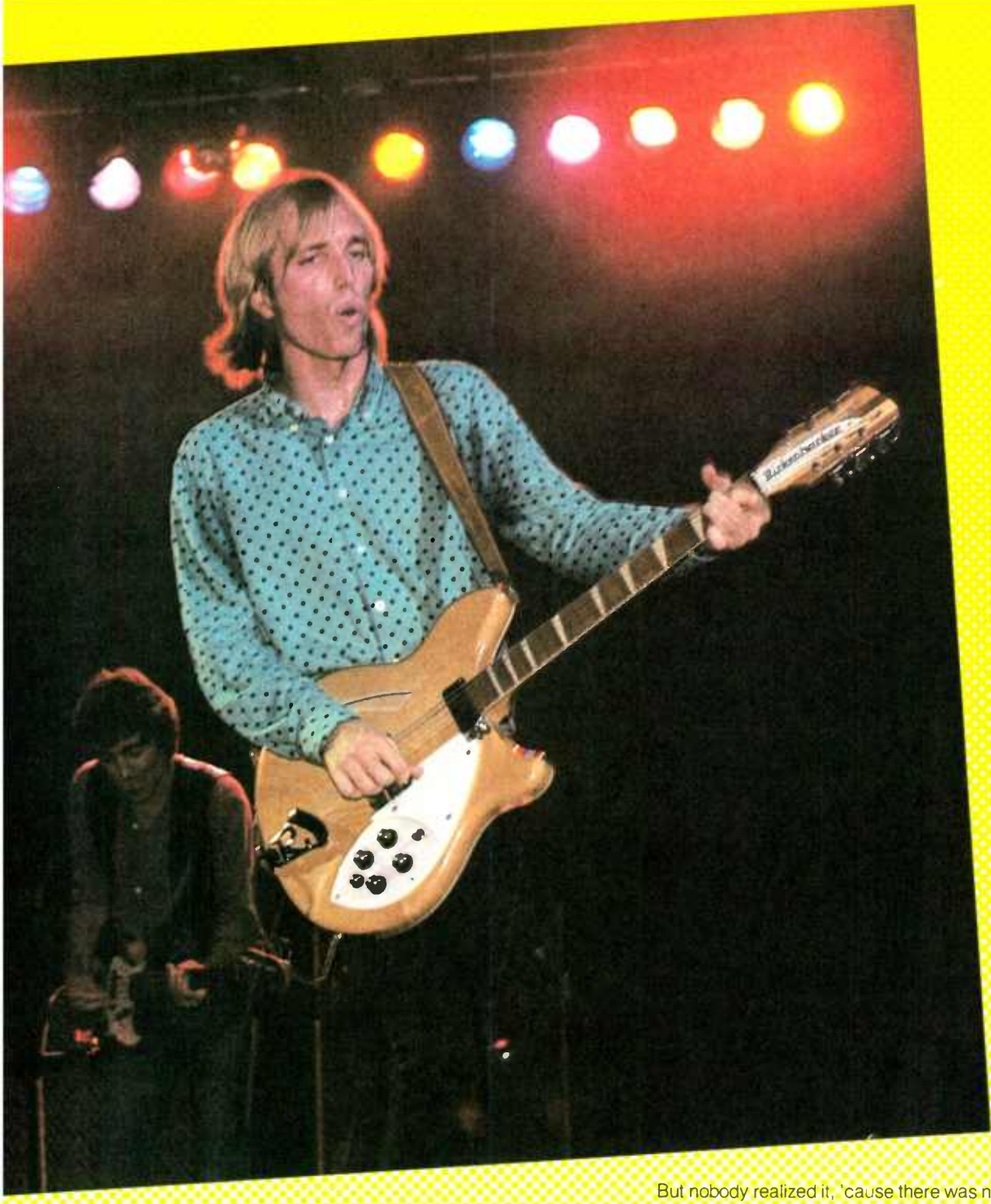
PETTY: That's because we listened to those records. The first records I ever had was a box of Elvis singles. You couldn't have picked a better box.

I had an uncle who was working on an Elvis movie in Florida. He invited us down to the set; I didn't know much about Elvis, but we went down, saw him do his little thing, went over and said hi. There was such pandemonium. I was about eleven. I can still remember how insane this trip was.

So we got back and the talk around the neighborhood among kids was that we saw *Elvis*, man. So my friend said, "Yeah, what'd he do? My sister's got his records." I'd never heard of them—"Hound Dog," I think I knew. And the guy gets out this box and his sister was married and gone but she'd been a teenager in the Fifties and the box was completely full of Elvis singles and the EPs. There was some Jerry Lee and Little Richard stuff. Took the whole box home for a Wham-O sling shot.

I literally spent the next two years, till the Beatles came, just listenin' to 'em everyday. It never, never occurred to me to play or that I would sing, it was just "These are great!" I'd listen to 'em all day. When the Beatles came, that kind of took over, and Elvis kind of moved to the back a little bit. By then, I must have been thirteen. Now I see, ah, you can do this. Here's a way out. Because even at twelve you gotta beat this place, gotta get out of Gainesville.

See, there's two parts to Gainesville. There's the college in



EBET ROBERTS

the middle and around it are just rednecks, farmers. My family didn't have anything to do with the college; I didn't have anything to do with the college until I started playing gigs. But for some reason, in the mid-Sixties there were so many bands there; I guess because there were gigs.

Marty Girard, that guy in the Motels, is a friend from Gainesville and we were talking the other day—at the time, we had no idea, that every town didn't have forty or fifty bands just playing all the time. Because there were thirty fraternity gigs every weekend, and then there were the college gigs and all those college beer bars and the topless bars. We used to play the topless bars, that was the big money: a hundred bucks a week, six sets a night.

Don Felder and Bernie Leadon of the Eagles, are both from Gainesville and there's a whole lot of players that come from there. I think the whole town—everybody I know—is here now. But nobody realized it, 'cause there was no studio.

It was a good way to grow up. It wasn't bad. You had to hustle if you wanted guitars and stuff like that. You had to really hustle if you wanted a new Telecaster. It drives me crazy to see these Hollywood bands today; they've got a semi-truck and a P.A., more gear than we got, and they don't have a record deal or nothin'. They're just playing the Whisky.

I took my kid to see the carnival down the street the other day. It was the first time I really felt successful. They had a group, like a garage band and I haven't seen a garage band in so long. It fascinated me. So I went, with my hat on and my hair up, and they had all big guitars and nice amps. I took a ride on the ferris wheel and went over to listen. They played the Who and the Stones and then they played "Breakdown." Amazing.

I'm standing in the middle of this crowd, watching them play this fifteen minute version of "Breakdown," over and over and on and on. It was really neat. That's the true heritage of rock'n'roll, when the garage bands start playing it.

STEELY DAN

Those consummate troublemakers, Donald Fagen and Walter Becker, are finally cornered, producing dangerously controversial observations on film, literature, Free Jazz, touring and the music of Steely Dan, undermining nearly every tenet of the music industry.

By David Breskin

Three years, two hundred out-takes, a few mistakenly erased tracks, and one shattered shank after *Aja*, Steely Dan has come sauntering out of hibernation with a ravishing new record, *Gaucho*. It's elegant, it's extravagant; it shows again why Walter Becker and Donald, the masters of Ellingtonian Backbeat Coolpop-Jazzrock, are the closest thing this generation has to pre-war sophistication of Porter and Berlin, Rodgers and Hart, Weill and Waller. If *Aja* convinced Woody Herman to let his big band loose on Steely Dan material (*Chick, Donald, Walter and Woodrow*, 1978), prompted a Berklee College of Music songwriting analysis course featuring their work, and elevated the taste of the frat-dance college crowd, one wonders what kind of a dent *Gaucho* might make. One thing it *won't* do is send Steely Dan back on the road, not even after Becker's car-crunched leg heals completely. Nor will they perform in their native New York. So we are left solely—and quite happily—with the music at hand.

Which is, as may be expected by now, sublime and fragrant and audaciously smooth. Steely Dan Inc.'s revolving door of studio sidemen hasn't stopped swinging yet—some 36 grace *Gaucho*—and I mean this in the musical sense as well: rarely have so many done so little spontaneous blowing for so much music that sounds so fresh. But it probably won't sound that way upon first or second listen; chances are it will sound soft and round, blandly pleasant, almost superficial. With further listening, each of the record's seven tunes opens and deepens, revealing the harmonic jewels and subtle understated solos. At first obscured by the dominant colors of the surface, background colors become apparent, much as they will in fine oil paintings as your eye moves closer and closer to them; rythmic nuances make themselves *felt*; each piece eventually jumps out of bed with the others and goes its own way: the patina, a rather mundane orgy of highgloss sensuality, gives way to the substance—seven different compositions in profound intercourse with their own partners, their indigenous lyrics.

As for the lyrics' subject matter, rest assured Steely Dan enters the '80s with some timely tales of tawdry high-life and desultory desperation. *Gaucho* overflows with mystics, coke dealers, sexual rivals, gosling girls ignorant of 'Retha Franklin, concupiscent Charlies out for "that cotton candy," playground hoopers, Third World schemers mobilized on First World lawns, surprisingly gay friends and bodacious cowboys. The stories are rich, richer than *Aja*'s, the metaphors subversive and witty.

I recently spoke with Messrs. Becker and Fagen at an MCA rented suite of the Park Lane Hotel on Central Park South in New York. As I entered the room, the two jokingly whined about the day's previous interviewers; every one, it seems, had grazed over the parched grass of basic bio material, asking, "So did you two really meet at Bard College? With furious swipes of my pen, I mimed scratching that one off the top of my list of questions and mumbled something about my masterplan being destroyed.

MUSICIAN: It *has* been a considerable time since Steely Dan first started: how do you feel you've grown as artists, as musicians and lyricists, since that time?

FAGEN: [Long pause] It's a matter of maturing. Becoming more selective with material, knowing what to write about, being able to pick and choose—showing more discretion than in the earlier days. Musically, our harmonic vocabulary and so on has expanded a great deal...so I feel we've progressed a lot since our first records. They are plain embar-

rassing, if you listen to them.

MUSICIAN: When you look back at your older work—as all artists, regretably or enthusiastically, must do—do you think, "Oh God, that just wasn't it at all?"

FAGEN: [laughs] Well, yeah, you know I don't listen to our old records, but if I happen to hear one on the radio, my general feeling is humiliation. I don't really understand some of our earlier stuff.

MUSICIAN: At what point can you begin to stand yourself, listening back? 1974? 1975?

FAGEN: The next album I like pretty well. The one we haven't done yet. The rest of them are fairly humiliating.

MUSICIAN: You don't feel *Gaucho* is what you want to sound like?

FAGEN: Well, on the humiliation scale each album gets lower and lower. I think starting with *Pretzel Logic*, I began to like a few cuts here and there as things I can really listen to.

MUSICIAN: How do you feel, Walter?

BECKER: Differently. But I don't listen to them either. I mean there were a lot of things that were very shoddily done, and a lot of things that were just bad, but probably different things for me than for Donald. We were doing the best we could, but fuck it, it wasn't very good.

FAGEN: It's like: have you ever seen a picture of yourself taken in 1969 or '70 with a group of girls in mini-skirts or something and you say . . .

BECKER: What is *that* asshole doing there, or why was I wearing that sweater or a shirt with a fake turtle-neck or something. It's just aged. But I don't think it's aged that much. The stuff that is lousy was lousy then.

FAGEN: Yeah, that's true . . . well, harmonically we were naive.

BECKER: And we were miming a lot of things, we were clowning around.

FAGEN: We started out imitating, as most people do . . .

BECKER: [slyly] And we continue to, in a much subtler way. Nothing comes from nothing. But *Do It Again* is a good fucking record. *Reelin' In The Years* is a good record.

FAGEN: I agree with that.

BECKER: It's only fuckin' rock 'n' roll. It's for kids. It's not Gustav Mahler, or even Kristin Fabriani. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: Come now, only for kids?

BECKER: Well you know what I mean . . .

MUSICIAN: Maybe, maybe not; I asked Donald about becoming older than your audience.

BECKER: I don't know to what extent that's true, because I don't know for sure who our audience is. There may be a lot of people older than me in our audience but you must be right. O.K., let's assume you're right, so how do I feel about that?

MUSICIAN: Yes, how do you feel about that in the context of your role as an artist, which you must feel is now only to entertain—to stuff hooks into some kid's ear—but also to create something meaningful for yourselves and your audience.

FAGEN: Basically, we've always composed for ourselves, which is the same as composing for your peers.

BECKER: Oh c'mon, you wouldn't do a thing like this for your peers.

FAGEN: I guess I assume that people our age are thinking the same way we are. I'm not thinking of any individuals.

BECKER: But that's all we have to go by. It's always amazed me that somehow I've felt we're good but I never knew if there was anybody that would think so. Not good in any ultimate sense, but good compared to the bullshit you hear. But I don't *feel* any older than my audience. I used to worry about getting old when I was 17. I couldn't imagine being 30. Now that I'm 30 I can't see the differrnce between being 30 and being 17.

MUSICIAN: Did you ever feel like a part of mainstream culture—which I guess was mainstream counter-culture—in the '60s. I mean: how many times does '68 go into 1981?

BECKER: Hell no, God, we were wallflowers. We were cranks. What do you say . . .

FAGEN: Aliens.

BECKER: Yeah, more alien . . . you got it. A lot of artists are aliens. They're really a bunch of geeks when you get right down to it.

MUSICIAN: And classical losers too, in the sense that they just don't fit in.

FAGEN: That's right, in the sense that New York is the depository for misfit Americans—there's a reason why we're here. And why we don't live in Cincinnati.

MUSICIAN: If artists are geeks, they're also scavengers. Do you find you can feed off the flesh of the city, the raw material so to speak? Is it a stimulus to your art that Los Angeles wasn't?

FAGEN: I think New York has revitalized our stuff. But L.A. did a lot for us as far as giving us a perspective on America.

FAGEN: It gave us something to really compain about, to bitch about creatively.

BECKER: You can look at the people you used to see three times a week and twist them in your mind, treat them inhumanely in your mind, to create a character without actually defaming them. But you can not accord them the respect that you accord every other human being. [Long pause] If there were no outside stimulus, I'd imagine we'd still have something to write about. Something we'd remembered or imagined.

FAGEN: You can create or compose in a vacuum.

BECKER: [To Fagen] How many times has someone offered you a house or a place to live and said, "This would be a great place to write a song," for you to "sit and look out at the garden and write" and it doesn't mean a fucking thing. You couldn't care whether the garden is there or not, as long as you don't have to spread the manure.

MUSICIAN: That reminds me of *The Shining*, where ole' Jack Nicholson goes into the mountains, to a big empty hotel to write his novel, to write in peace. And he ends up typing the same sentence over and over and over. He's removed himself.

BECKER: Keeping in mind that this is dance music, you are removing yourself from something by writing about it.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of dance music, can you see a time when you won't be concerned with prodding people out of their chairs?

FAGEN: I think we both really love rhythm-and-blues basically. A big back-beat. I don't know if it's a matter of dance music, it's a matter of pulse or feel.

BECKER: Jump music. Rhythm music. Something like that.

FAGEN: [grinning] Race music.

MUSICIAN: I know you agonize over your lyrics. Does it ever frustrate you that with many of the people listening, they may be going in one ear and, with little in between to stop them, right out the other?

BECKER: I assume that's the case for most of the audience, or at least a big part of it, and that's why we try to always make the lyrics not grab your attention. We want them to *sound* good with the music, even if you're not an English speaking person.

MUSICIAN: But for those that are listening, atlas and dictionary in hand, you don't want the lyrics to be one-shot deals, like a comedy record that you put on once, then tire of it.

BECKER: That's definitely a problem. We have to be clever, but not funny.

FAGEN: We have a problem, trying not to cross the comedy threshold.

BECKER: Everytime someone's in the next room when we're writing a song they'd say, "Don't tell me you're fucking writing songs in there, you're not working, 'cause you're fucking screaming and laughing in there. You're not writing, you're making up Pope jokes."

MUSICIAN: There's also always a certain self-consciousness about being funny. Walter, you once said you wanted to branch out into odd narrative styles and more radical approaches, as long as they were "funny in the end." What kind of "funny" were you referring to?

BECKER: I'm talking about the possibility of maintaining one's sense of humor under all possible circumstances. Funny as opposed to grave or solemn. Kurt Vonnegut's not funny, there's nothing funny about Dresden for instance, but it's *funny*. And we can't even be that funny in music.

FAGEN: When you're writing about serious subjects, and I guess we are, we have to remember that it's rock 'n' roll music and the risk of being pretentious is real high, if you're not careful.

BECKER: I had this in mind in "Gaucho" for instance, which is a conversational thing. I don't know if it makes sense to anybody.

FAGEN: But we try to give a sense of a situation. It's just too short a time to really explain everything; it's not a short story, it's not a novel.

MUSICIAN: It has to be a miniature.

FAGEN: Yeah, a miniature and sometimes you can't fill in the details. So you hope that you give the proper signals, so that people will get a sense of what you're talking about.

MUSICIAN: Let's use that song as a jumping off point in terms of your lyrics. Certain artists—perhaps writers or filmmakers more than songwriters—strive for a certain amount of polysemy, or ambiguity in their work, in service of not only their desire to create something right in meaning for their audience but also to keep some of their work personal, kind of private. For instance, if you're singing, "I WANNA BE SEDATED," you have given the whole kernel of thought to the audience in a very direct way. But if you sing about the Custerdome, you're hinting at some things but keeping your statement personal, retaining a certain amount of it for yourselves. Are you conscious of this sort of strategy?

BECKER: We're just trying to use what fits. It's the exact opposite of the *New York Times,* where it's "All The News That's Fit To Print." Here, we print what'll fit. Like you say, it's not even a short story, hardly a paragraph, so the story doesn't always fit. If you get—as opposed to the Kernel of the thought—the husk of the thought, maybe you can figure out what kind of story is there. I don't feel like I'm being stripped of anything if I'm understood. Why would anybody doing this sort of thing want to preserve something or keep it for themselves?

MUSICIAN: I'm not talking about international mystification or impenetrability, but there is a school of thought which says, while the artist must communicate to his audience, he may also keep certain details or underpinnings of the art rather private. It has to do with a between-the-lines quality of a narrative—meanings that people can guess at but which are not given to them in spoon-fed fashion.

FAGEN: It depends on the song and the subject matter. The lyrics must be subordinate to the music and you can only give as many clues as you have time for.

BECKER: We're not trying to protect anything. It's just that some of the smaller, pettier details in a story are the best ones. The little things that you retain in your sense more than in your mind; they may not make much sense but they color something. It's really hard. There may be something to what you're saying, in that, if something is open-ended, or means more than one thing, or is elliptical or whatever, someone listening to it carefully enough will in fact become creative, and fill in the spaces with their own intelligence. And you'd be amazed at the letters people have written to us about our song. Some guy wrote us and said "Rikki Don't Lose That Number" is about Eric Clapton and the number is a joint.

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FAGEN: Sometimes it frightens me when we get some weird stoned Moonie with these weird ideations about these songs, and he starts talking about taking some kind of *action* against who knows what.

BECKER: There was a guy living in Las Vegas when our first album came out who thought—his girlfriend had left him I guess—all of the songs were stories his girlfriend had told us. He wasn't asking any questions; he just wanted his girlfriend back. And we didn't know anything about the girl. But he thought every one of those stories was about him.

FAGEN: It's your basic Arthur Bremmer syndrome. We get a lot of letters that are written in very small printing with little pictures in the corner.

MUSICIAN: Well, you're talking about the peverse fringe of "active" listeners.

BECKER: No, this is the heart and soul of our audience. I've got news for you. Those weird people on the street—every hundreth weirdest one has a Steely Dan record at home.

MUSICIAN: People that are essentially out-takes.

BECKER: Right, or just flipped-out. Like that guy who hi-jacked that bus today [a friend of theirs had been hijacked in midtown Manhattan] probably has forty-seven copies of *The Royal Scam* at home.

MUSICIAN: The point is, despite the Vegas chump, a little restraint or open-endedness or ambiguity in a lyric—call it what you will—allows one to go back to a song time after time, and not just sing along, but get farther into it or think anew about it.

BECKER: Right, it doesn't have to make sense in a narrative way. Something tells me, though, that we've been better behaved in terms of being more narrative lately. I don't know if that's a good or bad thing. I think with the narratives that we're undertaking [hearty chuckle] it doesn't really matter.

FAGEN: I think we are communicating a little more directly than we have in the past.

MUSICIAN: Do either of you write poetry as poetry, that sort of sits around just waiting for the right piece of music?

FAGEN: Not as poetry per se.

BECKER: I used to do that, a long, long time ago, but I found out poetry was in much worse shape than any other art form, except maybe painting, which I also gave up because I didn't like getting paint all over myself.

FAGEN: We have fragments of things.

BECKER: Little lines and couplets . . .

FAGEN: Story ideas and the like . . .

BECKER: But nothing in finished form. Rythmically, if you read our poetry on the page it's nothing really.

MUSICIAN: So you have at least a skeleton of the music first, the chords, roughly the tempo, etc. and then you work on the lyrics line-by-line, side-by-side?

FAGEN: We work on them together. One of us will come up with the basic idea, maybe a few words, and then we'll fill in the blanks together as needed.

MUSICIAN: How do you resolve the conflicts—possibly different strategies on how to say something even if you both agree as to what will be said—without resorting to bloodshed?

FAGEN: We often see it in the same way. We've been together for a while.

BECKER: But it usually doesn't make that much difference it if comes down to one word.

FAGEN: Usually, if we disagree about something, it may be whether or not something is singable phonetically.

BECKER: That's *his* story. My story is whether it's something else. That's how we agree.

MUSICIAN: Walter, you mentioned dabbling in finger-painting and poetry. In all interviews it seems the interviewer asks for the inevitable listing of musical influences [and of course the answer is always B.B. King], but I'm particularly interested in what other artists—could be writers, painters, filmmakers, etc—have inspired you.

BECKER: You know, we've gotten in trouble on that with the "Steely Dan" thing [the name of a dildo in Burrough's great novel, *Naked Lunch*]. We've been invited out to dinner with William Burroughs a few times too many now by people who don't know us or William Burroughs. So with the caveat, I can say that I like Samuel Beckett. I think it's ironic and amusing that the greatest living writer in the English language writes in French.

MUSICIAN: What does that tell you?

BECKER: It tells me that he doesn't want to be a show-off.

FAGEN: We both have our individual preferences. Vladimir Nabokov is mine. I'm not visually oriented, but Walter likes very peculiar movies.

BECKER: A good cheap date. I have weird taste.

FAGEN: Walker's seen *The King of Marvin Gardens* quite a number of times.

BECKER: Donald goes for the value-per-dollar system.

FAGEN: Francis Ford Coppola stuff: *The Godfather, Apocalpyse Now.*

MUSICIAN: Can you imagine yourselves working on a more expansive musical project: a full soundtrack, a musical perhaps, or even the songs for a musical?

FAGEN: I'd like to, but the project would have to be perfectly suited to us. I wouldn't want to write background music, or music that's subordinate to visual material. Twyla Tharp, the choreographer, had a project she wanted us to write the music for. The dancing was very good, but she had a script in which the dancers would speak and the story was, uh . . . extremely confused, we thought.

BECKER: Mainly, the whole dance project was conceived without any concern for the music. To her, it was a completed project. It was as if she had done a painting, and all she needed was the frame. That is to say, the music.

FAGEN: Well we don't know shit about dance, so we sorta bowed out of that one. But if she did something that had less structure as far as a story I could see writing music for her.

BECKER: Ronnie Reagan is president, so I wouldn't mind doing a Kurt Weill or Bertolt Brecht kind of thing. There's potential in that.

FAGEN: Socialist opera.

BECKER: Anarchist opera.

MUSICIAN: What about an extended work—a unified work of considerable length—whether you want to call it a suite or opera or whatever?

FAGEN: We've discussed this, like the idea of a concept album, but it's awfully hard.

BECKER: I thought *Aja* itself was dangerously ambitious. I really did.

FAGEN: I dunno, I think we work best on miniatures. I like variety. We work better with vignettes.

MUSICIAN: Anyway, how do you characterize the new record, as opposed to say, *Aja*?

BECKER: [Half-kidding] Excellent, excellent. Newer, bluer.

FAGEN: That's a difficult question because we write the songs individually. They are single audio objects; we don't plan the album conceptually. So it's hard to characterize the thing as a whole.

MUSICIAN: Well if not different as a whole—I know it was recorded over a two year span—then do you see it as a little step forward?

FAGEN: It's possible that we took a few steps backward with this album. In a way, it's rhythmically more simplistic than *Aja*.

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But the harmonies are interesting. I don't know if it's better or worse.

BECKER: I don't think there's a progression at this point—it's too deliberate on our part. We're moving sideways. When you're writing one song at a time over a long period and you don't know which ones are eventually going to get recorded and which are then going to be on the record, and then you put them together in a certain order and put it in a package, all of a sudden it's *something.*

FAGEN: It becomes something else.

BECKER: It becomes something you hadn't anticipated. It's taken as a whole, even to me anyway, I take it as a whole. And it has a character as a whole that the individual parts never had.

MUSICIAN: As your vocabulary grows, musically and lyrically, and you become more aware of your artistic options, do you find it more difficult to finish a song? That is, the more strategies you're familir with, the tougher it is to decide which one to use?

BECKER: It got tough awhile ago. Yes, the last verse is hard to write. The more you know, the more you might paint yourself into a corner.

FAGEN: But the way we write—it's more improvisational and instinctual. We don't really use "strategies" consciously.

BECKER: But nevertheless there it is, the method. By the time you've finished everything except that last piece or link of a song, you've got to make some very, very conscious choices.

FAGEN: All right, we've learned certain things in terms of how to present the material. We now know what a bridge is supposed to do: it opens up the song musically. And we tend to open it up lyrically as well—to talk about the subject more generally than the verses do.

BECKER: And it's also a real release from the tension of the lyrics in the verses. You're suspended in time for awhile.

FAGEN: [wryly] The traditional popular song form of the '30s and '40s has served us well.

BECKER: Oh yes, right through the '80s.

FAGEN: I like it, it's a good thing. It's the closest thing we have to a *structure* for rock 'n' roll. It's blues, and traditional song form.

MUSICIAN: How do you feel about modern improvisational music that diverges from that structure? Music that's come after the religious and political saxophoning of the '60s—like The Art Ensemble, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, etc.?

BECKER: I don't like any of it. I'd like to think that I'm open-minded, but nothing could be further from the truth.

FAGEN: We're real conservatives.

MUSICIAN: A post-modernist like Braxton uses many different kinds of structures. He's a structuralist of sorts, though maybe not in the mode of traditional song form.

BECKER: But he can't even play, so what does it matter? I can't figure it out. He sounds like a guy who has no tone, plays outa tune, and I don't know why he's playing what he's playing. Maybe I just heard the wrong records. Now Sam Rivers—the first album I heard of his sounded very interesting to me, but

lately he sounds exactly like Braxton.

MUSICIAN: Let's go back twenty years—before the advent of religious saxophoning—you have Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*, which sounded so far-out then, sounds almost quaint now—in that it swings like mad, it's fairly orderly and well-structured and so on.

BECKER: I know. The first time I put on an Ornette record I said, "This is Charlie Parker music except the guy has a plastic saxophone and no chord changes." I couldn't believe that people talked about how "modern" it was. Ornette is not the greatest musician in the world. He has had some bad nights, let's face it. And if you've ever had to go hear him play the violin, or hear him with his son or with the electric guitarists, you have to ask, "How free can a guy with that limited talent be?"

FAGEN: Not that many people can get away with . . .

BECKER: What he does.

FAGEN: With not having any structure. Very few do.

BECKER: He had a few very good ideas. And he had an incredible band.

MUSICIAN: Well what about some of the ECM artists of the last decade?

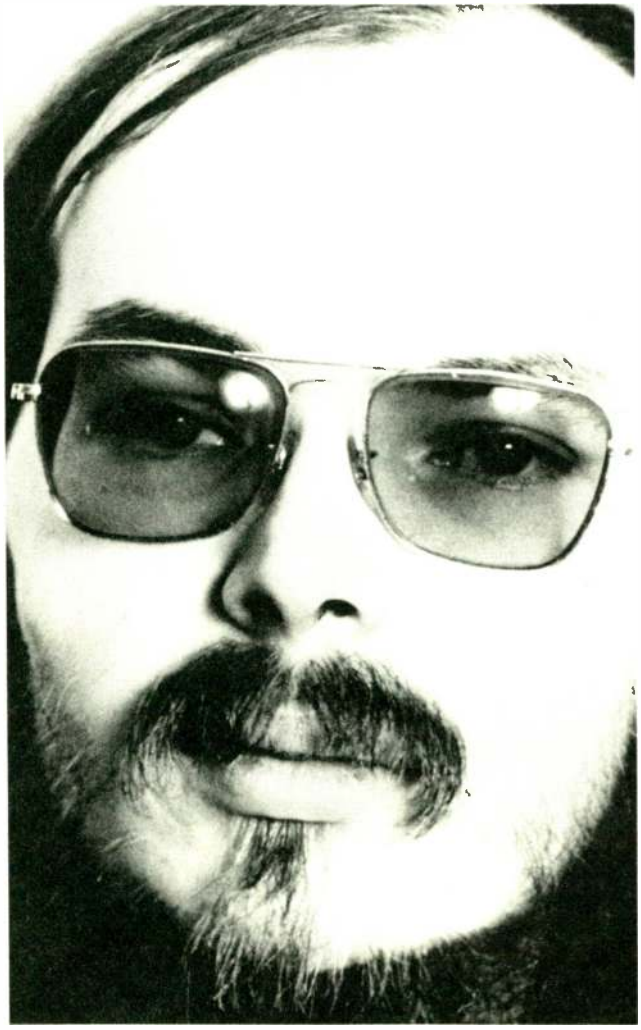
FAGEN: Very uninteresting on the whole.

BECKER: [sarcastically] Dance music. But Jan Garbarek is very good.

MUSICIAN: We were talking about borrowing . . .

FAGEN: Hell, we steal. We're the robber barons of rock 'n' roll.

MUSICIAN: Well, the only other thing on the record that seems obviously borrowed is "Glamour Profession." The rhythm and feel of it, and the way the synthesizer/horn vamp swings against the pulse sounds very much like Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band.



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BECKER: I don't listen to them. Donald listens to them. But I see what you mean though.

MUSICIAN: I'm not saying it was necessarily a conscious act of pilferage.

FAGEN: That song was influenced by disco music in general.

MUSICIAN: Nouveau Swing Disco?

FAGEN: What you're saying is basically valid. There are other things that are borrowed too. The bridge on "Glamour Profession" is a take on the bridge of Kurt Weill's "Speak Low."

BECKER: Which is taken from Ravel.

MUSICIAN: What about popular music? Anything going on that you might be a bit more enthusiastic about?

BECKER: I've had a tough time with the radio lately. It's pathetic.

FAGEN: The Talking Heads are very interesting. They're a top band.

MUSICIAN: That's what happens when you go to Rhode Island School of Design.

FAGEN: Fortunately, it's mainly their album covers that I like. The covers and the guy's eyes are great. There's at least an intelligence behind them, which is more than you can say for most groups.

BECKER: Further and further behind as time goes by . . . they're leaving it in the dust.

FAGEN: I like Donna Summers' records.

BECKER: I bought the single, "Turn Out The Lights." Had to have it.

FAGEN: I did like Dr. Buzzard's first record. But only that one.

MUSICIAN: So I guess it's pretty bleak out there, is that what you're saying?

BECKER: I guess, unless there's something happening out there that's being suppressed, which is entirely possible.

FAGEN: Oh, you know what I went for in a way, Ian Drury and The Blockheads. More of a comedy thing.

BECKER: Warne Marsh is the best I've heard in the past three years.

MUSICIAN: Do you plan to produce another album of his along the lines of the one with Pete Christlieb?

BECKER: No, no more. Because it's too hard to get Warne what he wants. And he wants Neils Henning Orsted Pederson, who used to be only great and now is just *ridiculous*.

FAGEN: One more thing, I heard a record the other day, a raggy sort of thing, Scott Joplin rags, by some funny tenor player, Henry Threadgill.

MUSICIAN: That's Air, the supertrio out of the, ahem . . . AACM.

BECKER: On the other hand, how new is all that—Ragtime is only so recent you know. But I still like boogie-woogie. Meade Lux Lewis and Albert Ammons.

MUSICIAN: There's often a distinction made between folk-art (let's say boogie woogie) or pop-art (let's say rock) and art-art, that is, *serious* art of western civilization and all. Where does Steely Dan fit in?

BECKER: Whatever the difference is, we fit in the middle, we hope.

MUSICIAN: I wonder whether the distinction between high art and folk art, with the blues for instance traditionally falling in the latter category, is even relevant anymore?

BECKER: No, no. Not anymore.

FAGEN: At one time perhaps it was relevant.

BECKER: There was serious art and then there was non-serious art. Serious of course meant boring.

MUSICIAN: And then you had television.

FAGEN: Ah yes, the great equalizer.

MUSICIAN: Television is probably the most profound shaping force in our society, yet it seems artists have a tough time dealing with it.

BECKER: That's because TV is anti-artistic. I was on my back for six months and so naturally TV came into my life in a big way.

I used to have a cable TV thing hooked up and it bothered me 'cause I had trouble reaching the knob, and I disconnected it because I realized it doesn't matter what you watch.

FAGEN: I can't believe the video-disc thing. It's madness: how much television can you watch. Steely Dan is not exactly a good item for video discs.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of video discs and corporatized mass culture . . . given the certain, uh, socio-political stance that comes through in your work, how do you feel about being produced, packaged, and marketed by huge corporations?

BECKER: I think they're the mafia, that's what I think. I really do. I don't like them. This new record costs a dollar more, it costs $9.98. And we said: "Please don't make it $9.98, that's too much." But we didn't matter. I feel like I'm robbing somebody, even though I benefit from it—I don't want it. It has nothing to do with recording artists. I don't think any recording artists said, "Make the records a dollar more so we can make more money." And I don't think any recording artists with our "socio-political stance"—because that's exactly what it is—wants to take X number of extra cents a record if it means raising the price. Who can swallow that? It's awful, but they just do it.

By 1974 I realized that the reason we weren't making any more was that we were made to think we'd have to be on the road to have enough money to live and that we were always making the same amount of money no matter how many records we sold. So being politically minded, which I am, I was certainly angry about that.

MUSICIAN: Any possibility that you might tour in the future?

BECKER: NO—that's about how political we are; we're not gonna tell the world about it unless you do it for us—but we're not gonna do it. And there are personal reasons.

FAGEN: Michael McDonald was in town the other night and gave me tickets to this Doobie Brothers concert, which I went to. I didn't stay long. Just going back into that world for a few hours—whew—it was unbelievable.

BECKER: The concerts are for the kids. The concert is where the party is. That's where the kids go, whoever may be playing. For instance, at one point we were opening for Frank Zappa, and he had a band with like nine brass instruments that no one knew the names of, a sarouzaphone soloist, a drummer reading the charts—a very arcane thing—and it wasn't worth it, but the point was: everyone was there and the hall was filled because that's where the party was, and that's where everybody went to do drugs.

FAGEN: Another thing I noticed at this Doobies concert was that look. We used to open for the Doobies when they were a different band, kind of a biker band with the long hair and leather jackets. They're different now. With all the agony we had on the road—and it was pretty bad sometimes, because we weren't really suited to touring as far as our personalities go . . .

BECKER: We were suited for indigestion . . .

FAGEN: But we had a lot more *fun* than it seems they're having now. Now it's strictly business.

BECKER: Big business and big dollars.

FAGEN: And they're backstage, the Doobies. Well, when we toured we'd get to the hall and start drinking and so on—you had to do it to survive on the road—but I noticed that the guy who used to have the long hair and the leather jacket had on a business suit and a coiff. It was strictly business. You know, Michael got there right before the show and he went on, 1-2-3, and did his thing. No drinks, no fun, no fucking around, no comraderie. Business—and that's the way you have to do it.

MUSICIAN: Well, do you gig around privately, to work on your chops or just have a good time?

BECKER: I've been trying to figure out a way to do that, but you know, I can't figure out how people gig privately with the kind of music we play. New Wave and Top 40, I don't want to do any of that shit. I wish Jay and The Americans were still working.

MUSICIAN: Can you see putting a new band together, with which you could work without feeling like capitalists exploiting

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are oppressing the musicians in your employ?

BECKER: It's not even that anymore. The point now is, we've realized if we tried to do it what we'd be doing is re-creating something. It would be like Beatlemania. Do you realize how many musicians are on all our records. I mean: I'd have to learn all the bass parts. I'm gonna learn Chuck Rainey's bass parts?

FAGEN: We're too lazy. What's more, after *Aja* came out, we tried to put something together with session musicians, good musicians. And as we started to run down the tunes this incredible sense of ennui came over both of us.

BECKER: It was a bad thing. And there was a socio-economic component added to that which I'm not gonna even talk about. But it was terrible.

FAGEN: It was unbelievably boring to start to run down these tunes for public performances.

BECKER: We had 4,000 dollars worth of musicians in the room. Guys who wouldn't go out on the road for Miles Davis, literally, and they were committed to doing this. And we both left the room together and said, "What do you say, you wanna can it." And we both said "yeah" without thinking twice.

FAGEN: We couldn't do it. It was depressing. We were going backwards.

BECKER: You play the same fucking song every single night. You're not creating anything, you're re-creating something.

MUSICIAN: Well jazz fans, what about improvising.

BECKER: Well that would be something different. It's something I've been thinking about, but the format would have to be different.

MUSICIAN: We'll be content to wait for your next record. What may we expect?

FAGEN: We'll be with a new company, Warners. And, as of yet, we have no plans.

TALKING

BY DAVID BRESKIN

As he was carrying the wood away, dancing and staggering on, he met over a million homeless-ghosts of his kind who were listening to my cry as a radio. Whenever these ghosts met him and listened to my cry which was a lofty music for a few minutes, if they could not bear the music and stand still then the whole of them would start to dance at the same time as a madman."

— Amos Tutuola, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*

The author is Nigerian, the context is mythological, the narrator a small boy wandering warily through the African Bush, but the subject of the passage, our subject, is a 28-year-old American pop star who, just now, is coiled in the corner of his near-empty new loft in Soho, New York City, watching a videotape of genuine African dancers in a genuine native village moving to genuine African drumming. Our Scottish-born subject happens to have a record out with the same title as Tutuola's novel, happens to have a collaborator (see Eno story when you're done here) just back from a music safari in Ghana, happens to have seen the light beaconed by the civilization that sprung up at Oldavi Gorge, right under Dr. Louis Leakey's nose in that neat film they show in high school.

Or see it this way: the sensitive psycho-killer with Care-package eyes and no compassion leaves the West, takes himself to the river, drops himself in and swims upstream into the heart of the heart of darkness and finds, at its source, the rhythm of the rhythm of light, life. He wishes to remain there, yet he wishes to move on — within an arm's reach from where he sits, thoughtful and angular on the sofa, is a tape labelled "Music of Indonesia," a penciled note with (the Indian violinist) L. Shankar's phone number on it, and The Jackson's *Triumph* on cassette. *Remain In Light*, but move on.

David Byrne will. Talking Heads probably will. Brian Eno, their producer, most certainly will — though perhaps not in their company. The focal point of all this movement is, of

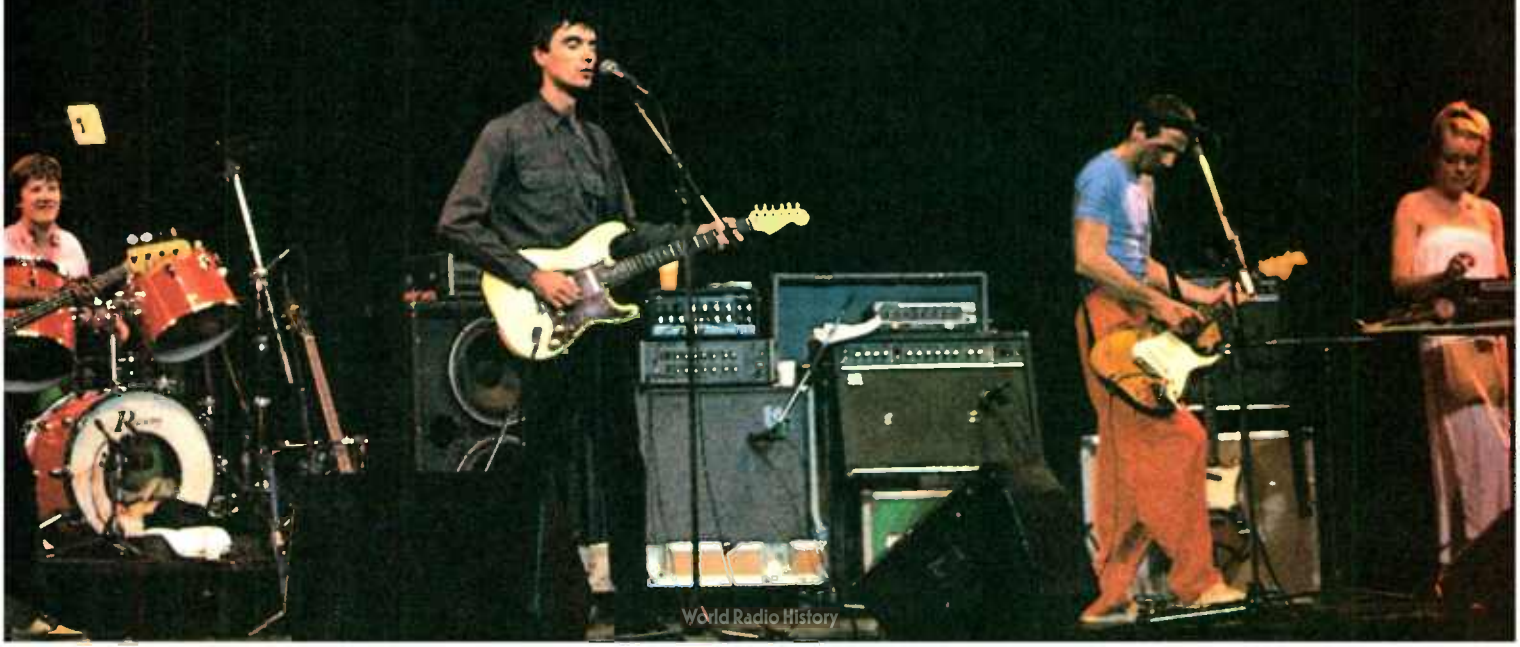
HEADS

BY DAVID BRESKIN

course, their movable Afro-funk-psychedelic feast, *Remain In Light*. Easily the most exciting popular effort of 1980, it was also the best dance disc since Parliament's *Funkentelechy vs. The Placebo Syndrome* and one of those rare pop records that jazz and modern classical listeners didn't turn up their noses at. Most importantly, *Remain In Light* signalled a musical, emotional, and philosophical change within Talking Heads — most notably, within the head Head, David Byrne.

One, two, three. From the first three beats of the African drum that literally and symbolically *announces* the record, we know everything will change its shape: the impetus will become polyrhythmic, not straight Beat; the vocals will be chanted, preached and talked, layered and woven in circular patterns, not whooped and shrieked in solitary confinement; the tone will be affirmative and spiritual, not sardonic and paranoid; the parts will be interlocked and communal, not autonomous and individualistic. In time, the music would explode the familiar quartet of Christ Frantz, Tina Weymouth, Jerry Harrison and Byrne (hey, remember the '70s?) into a nonet featuring P-Funk freeboardist Bernie Worrell and ex-Bowie, ex-Zappa guitarist Adrian Belew. And don't mistake that red-splotched cover of *Remain In Light* for just another groovy graphic: those Heads are wearing face paint, those Heads are wearing techno-tribal masks.

The missing link in our pilgrims progress from *Fear Of Music* to Afrunkidelica was Byrne's collaborative work with Eno, *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. It was to precede *Remain In Light* into the market-place — Eno calls it a "laboratory" for that record, Byrne a "blueprint" — but events conspired to hold back its release until this March. On it we can hear the rising tide of pan-ethnic stylings, a growing concern for what idealists call the World Village: Algerian Muslims chant the Qu'ran, American evangelists testify, Georgia's Sea Islanc singers spin a folk tale, a Lebanese mountain singer calls from the hills, an exorcist goes after Jezebel on a New York radic station, an Egyptian pop singer slithers through a maze of



ANDY FREEBERG/RETNA

percussion, an "inflamed caller and smooth politician" are stolen from a radio call-in show and reduced to electronic gibberish. These are the "found" voices on the record, the ghosts, if you will; Byrne and Eno, and a small army of percussionists, supply the accompanying rushes of rhythm and the washes of color. It's funny, it's arty, it's high-tech ethno-pop. And you can dance to it.

Talking Heads, talking bodies, talking spirits, talking drums: David Byrne is talking about the things that matter to him these days. The light of this one—and only this one—is slowly pulled away by the clock, leaving his unlit loft darkened. Byrne speaks slowly, pausing for thought after every question, every sentence at times. His voice—so jolting and wounded on Talking Heads' first three records, so messianic on *Remain In Light*—is barely above a whisper. He talks as a young man with an old man's soul might talk.

MUSICIAN: When did your fascination with ethnic music begin?

BYRNE: Oh, I started listening to it when I was in high school, getting records out of the library. But it wasn't until about three years ago that I started looking for pop records from other parts of the world. I was interested if there might be some sort of merger of forms happening. Perhaps there were groups somewhere playing in traditional styles using electric guitars or whatever. And sure enough that does happen. So I looked for African pop records and Brazilian pop records, that sort of thing. Also, some Islamic music, and I've also listened to Indonesian music—which has some good rhythmic stuff—and some real nice Vietnamese records. But the African music was the easiest to relate to right away.

MUSICIAN: Because of the rhythmic impetus?

BYRNE: Yes, because of all the similarities to what is now American music. It was very exciting, very fascinating for me to hear things in that music which are also a part of American funk music and other kinds of black American music. I think the main difference between the African ethnic music and American funk is that some of the textures are real different; the overall textures and the combinations of instruments they use, the way they build an orchestra, is very different than just guitar-bass-drums-percussion. So overall, it might have the same structure but still a very different sound to it. It was a good starting point for inspiration.

MUSICIAN: In terms of the funk on this side of the ocean, I would assume George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic thang caught your ear.

BYRNE: Uh-huh, most definitely. But I started out listening to some of the older stuff: James Brown, Kool & The Gang, Sly Stone in the late '60s and early '70s.

MUSICIAN: I don't suppose your exploration will stop with the Afro-funk-psychedelic fusion of the last two records. I hear you're going to check out some Gamelan music in Indonesia.

BYRNE: That's right. I'm going to Bali after our tour of Japan. A guy contacted me who had been doing some recording in Hong Kong and had been to Bali and had contacts for me. It seemed like a good opportunity to check the situation out, to work with some musicians over there and see what might develop. It's not like that music is my number one favorite or anything, but it's a chance to check it out.

MUSICIAN: In the meantime, you're plowing ahead with your work in visual art forms—photography and video. At one point, wasn't your visual art more developed than your music?

BYRNE: I always felt like I could have gone either way, at any time. It seemed like the art schools were much looser than the music schools and the technical schools, and when I went into college I had to decide whether to go into the sciences or the arts.

MUSICIAN: Do you feel you bring the same rationalistic rigor to your art that the mathematician or systems analyst brings to his work?

BYRNE: Yeah, I do tend to look at things that way sometimes. It's useful, it amuses me. But the final decision on whether something stays or goes is usually based on some sort of

intuitive thing, not on whether it fits into a system of a concept or a theory. It has to sound right.

MUSICIAN: Our society insists on a large dichotomy between rationality and intuition . . .

BYRNE: Uh-huh, but it doesn't have to be such a split. It's not so hard to use both at the same time, or to use either one when the other one fails. If one doesn't seem to be leading anywhere, use the other one. For instance, if I go into a studio with nothing planned, I could piddle around on my instrument to see what happens intuitively. Now there's a chance I might get something, but it seems like there'd be more chance if there was some sort of process I was using to construct the piece. If I formulate a structure, then I have to be intuitive within my restrictions—and that can be more productive. A lot of people who compose or dance or whatever, go through this process in their heads; they just don't externalize it, or talk about it.

MUSICIAN: Using strict formal parameters for a project doesn't necessarily mean it can't open up as you go along?

BYRNE: No, as long as you don't let it block you from keeping your ears open to what's happening as the project develops. Sometimes things can happen in the opposite way: you can start with a very loose concept or notion or a direction and then you just improvise off of that. Then you go back and look or listen to the improvisations and pick out the interesting bits and formalize those. You might find an interesting pattern, then pick it out and learn it. I just did a videotape out on the west coast that involved me dancing in it, and that's the way I did the rehearsals: improvising within a general framework in front of a little port-a-pack video camera. I'd look back and pick out the good parts and just do those moves again.

MUSICIAN: Sort of like visual bio-feedback?

BYRNE: Yeah, only I'd have to walk around to the monitor later. I'd review it and say, "That was a good move, that one really connects. It's just abstract looking enough, it doesn't look like I'm just miming something." That was the kind of thing I was looking for. I would pick out moves that would fit into that category and do them again.

MUSICIAN: Do you enjoy dancing?

BYRNE: Yes, but I don't think I'm very good at it. I started dancing a lot on stage during the last tour. The music we were playing made me want to dance more and the fact we had more musicians freed me from having to concentrate and be at the microphone all the time. And that gave me the confidence to go ahead and do it. But now I feel I have to buckle down and work at it; there seems to be a big difference between dancing for enjoyment, to express yourself, not caring what it looks like, and dancing because you want it to have a certain visual look to it. In this case, on the videotape, I'm dancing to "Once In A Lifetime."

MUSICIAN: It's a curious phenomenon, how dancing to a given piece really affects the way one listens to it, or hears it.

BYRNE: Yes. I can show you some tapes of dancing that illustrates that pretty well. I have one of African dancing, where the music is really pretty fast rhythmically, but their dancing looks like it's in slow-motion. In fact, you'd be convinced it was a slow-motion until you see somebody walk by in the background at normal speed. And so that dancing can make you hear a slower rhythm happening inside—or around—the faster rhythm. Likewise, I have a tape of some dancers in L.A. called the Electric Boogaloos, who do a lot of ticks, little jerks for just a second.]Demonstrates by moving shoulder and arm in minute robot-like fashion.] This makes you hear other beats, off-beats, that you might not have paid much attention to.

MUSICIAN: Dancing also activates the listener, makes him less of a consumer and more of a participant, more completely involved in a mind-body-spirit sort of way.

BYRNE: Yeah, I think when people dance they immediately eliminate that mind-body separation. There is an open flow between them. And in a way, it's not even necessary to dance sometimes when the music is real funky, because you hear it almost as much with your body—even if you're not moving around—as with your ears. So your body's own rhythm interprets it.

MUSICIAN: The participating listener also might help turn the music from the more passive realm of art-for-consumption to something more like ritual or social event, as with so-called "primitive" cultures?

BYRNE: Uh-huh. If you call the kind of music we're doing now "non-hierarchical" then performing it for a community in a way describes the way a community can be organized, that it can work without having that kind of hierarchy. So the music becomes a sort of aural demonstration.

MUSICIAN: Music as metaphor?

BYRNE: Yes, as a metaphor for a social system. It doesn't even require thought when you hear it. It communicates more directly. People might hear a piece of music that's organized in a particular way and really enjoy it—because that's the way they'd like other things to be organized. Maybe it's the kind of social organization they're comfortable with, so the music really connects to them on some sort of deep level.Yeah, it does sound pretty idealistic. Yet most art shoots for the same sort of thing: it comes to work as a metaphor for something else—a way of organizing people socially or a way of looking at the world. I guess if you look at it this way it's not so idealistic; most times, music and art isn't necessarily trying to change the world so much as just demonstrate a structure that can exist, and *does* exist, that people might be able to relate to.

MUSICIAN: Given the direction of your music and the emphasis on community, how does the Talking Heads community function? I don't suppose you could call it a non-hierarchical or democratic one, since you and Eno have been most responsible for the direction of the music.

BYRNE: The problem is that people tend to confuse "non-hierarchical" with "democratic." They equate the two. So it's one thing or the other: there's either a dictator and a bunch of people being bounced around, or, everybody's equal. But there's other ways of working things that work quite well. Like in Japan, there's a definite hierarchy, but no one feels put-upon. The people at the lower end of the hierarchy feel that's their place. The general attitude is: that's where they belong and they are to be respected for it, respected for their ability to fit into their niche.

MUSICIAN: Yeah but David, in the wrong society that has dangerous implications. Or even in the wrong pop group.

BYRNE: Well it works in Japanese society because of their respect system—a person is respected to the extent he fits into his proper place. I think other things can work this way. Different people are good at doing different things—so they're definitely not equal, but they may be mutually respected by one another for doing whatever job it is they do. The tricky part is being mutually respected. It's difficult but I think it's possible.

MUSICIAN: Hell, if you're patterning your music from the spirit and sensibilities of African music, maybe you're patterning the T.Heads after African society? As I understand them, African tribal societies are not exactly "democracies" in the western sense.

BYRNE: If one kind of decision has to be made in the tribe or cult, then there is a small society within it that makes that particular kind of decision. If the crops fail, the farmers might consult the people who deal with spirits. And so on and so on. There are different people who decide different things in the community. Now there may be a head governing body . . .

MUSICIAN: But if you bring all that back to this side of the Atlantic for a second, it somehow ends up as a "Talking Heads In Trouble" heading in *Rolling Stone* . . .

BYRNE: And I feel that that kind of thing is a shame, because it takes attention away from the music and things that I think are much more exciting than the difficulties of keeping a band together. It's a real shame, it brings things down to the level of gossip. Anything I say can get reduced to grist for the gossip mills.

MUSICIAN: Implicit in the judgement, "Talking Heads In Trouble," is the notion that interpersonal friction is detrimental to the making of good art. Nonsense. Think of that first Mahavishnu Orchestra. Friction can create heat and heat ain't such a bad thing for music . . .

BYRNE: Yeah, I know what you mean.

MUSICIAN: Now what about what you've called the "rock musician's capitalistic way of thinking" vis-a-vis the way your music works now. Could you flesh that out a bit?

BYRNE: A guy named Max Weber wrote a book in the '20s I think called *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. He was attempting to explain how a peoples' spiritual foundations lead them to a particular economic way of life, how their religious and moral upbringing leads them to a social and economic attitude. I think this is true for rock musicians as much as anyone. They've grown up in a society that values competition, the whole dog-eat-dog beat-out-the-other-guy kind of thing. So they're bound to play music in the same way: trying to out-solo the other guy, trying to play louder than the other guy, etc. All that's very different than the kind of music we're playing, where you have to leave a lot of holes in what you're playing in order for the other parts to be heard, where the whole thing doesn't take off unless you can hear lots of different people's parts popping in here and there. This is not to say we negate ourselves as individuals, but that we get something by *restricting* our individual freedoms that we couldn't get otherwise. The whole feeling this music generates for me—the whole *community* of interlocking parts—is totally different than what rock does. Presently, I don't feel I have any connection to rock and roll. In a lot of rock music, people tend to play all the time, or at least as much as they can get away with.

MUSICIAN: Didn't you go through a phase of basic American ego-laden individualism, that sort of playing?

BYRNE: Sure, and that works: you get a kind of music that fits that whole way of thinking. But I just happen to be real excited by other kinds of things.

MUSICIAN: Is your current music an arrival or a direction or perhaps only a stage? How do you think about it?

BYRNE: [Puzzled.] I don't know. I don't know what we're gonna do next. I guess it's a direction.

MUSICIAN: Do you have any fear that you might find yourself either duplicating or regressing from the point of *Remain In Light*?

BYRNE: Not really. I'm ambivalent about all the pressure to come up with something new.

MUSICIAN: NEW AND IMPROVED . . .

BYRNE: Yeah, and I put the pressure on myself, it's not like it's put upon me by the record company or the critics. I put it on myself that I'm supposed to come up with something new and improved each time.And I think it's probably not necessary. It seems perfectly reasonable to be able to enjoy music without having to be startled and shocked every time you put on somebody's record. [Laughs.]

MUSICIAN: Nevertheless, you ve internalized the values that have made you want to do that.

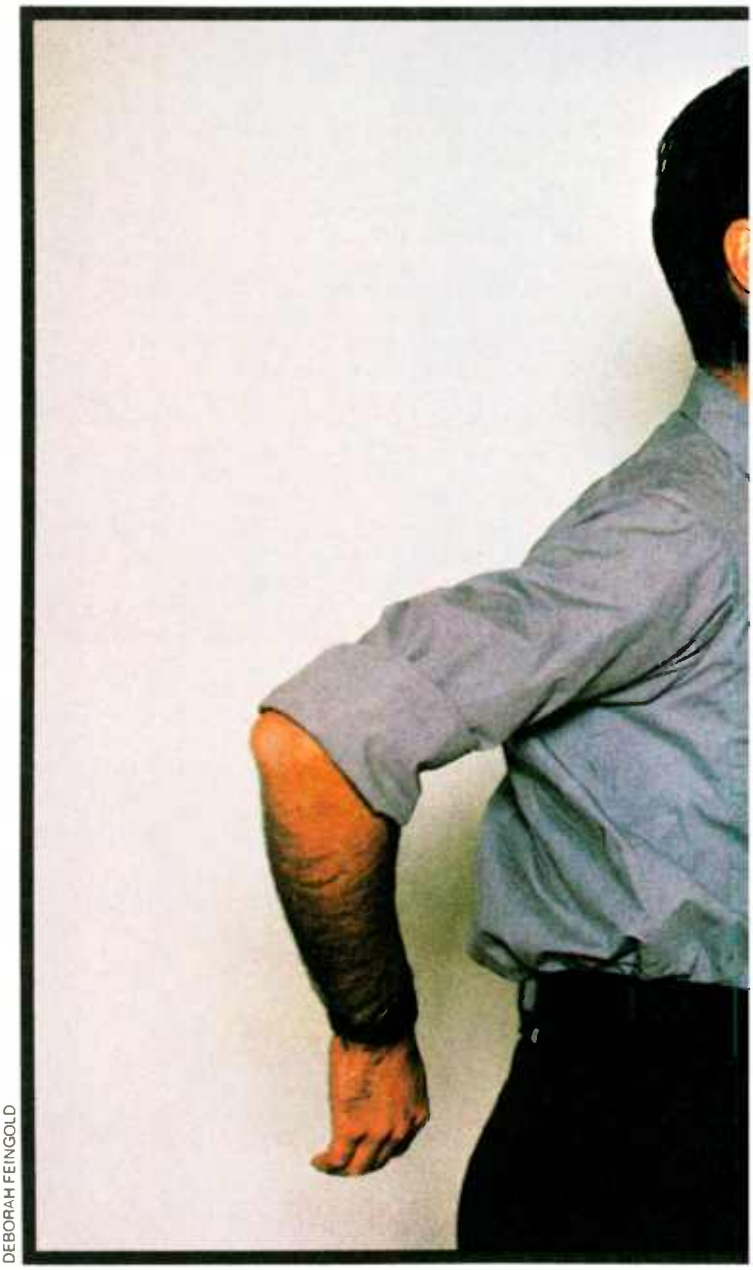
BYRNE: Yeah, I'm pretty stuck with them. I'm totally gonna keep trying to do that, and I feel I have.

MUSICIAN: It could get tough after your tenth record.

BYRNE: That's what I mean! After a while you might get to the point where you do something new only because it's different than what you've done before.

MUSICIAN: That seems like reason enough to explore other media.

BYRNE: Well I have been doing work in video. I did a project with Toni Basil of the Locker Dancers, and I helped out Bruce Conner with a couple of films to music from *Bush Of Ghosts*, and one I did myself. All this occupied me for a good while and I spent a lot of money on these things. And I've been doing these photos [points to huge, warm-toned prints lying on the floor] for the past few years that I've only recently had blown up.



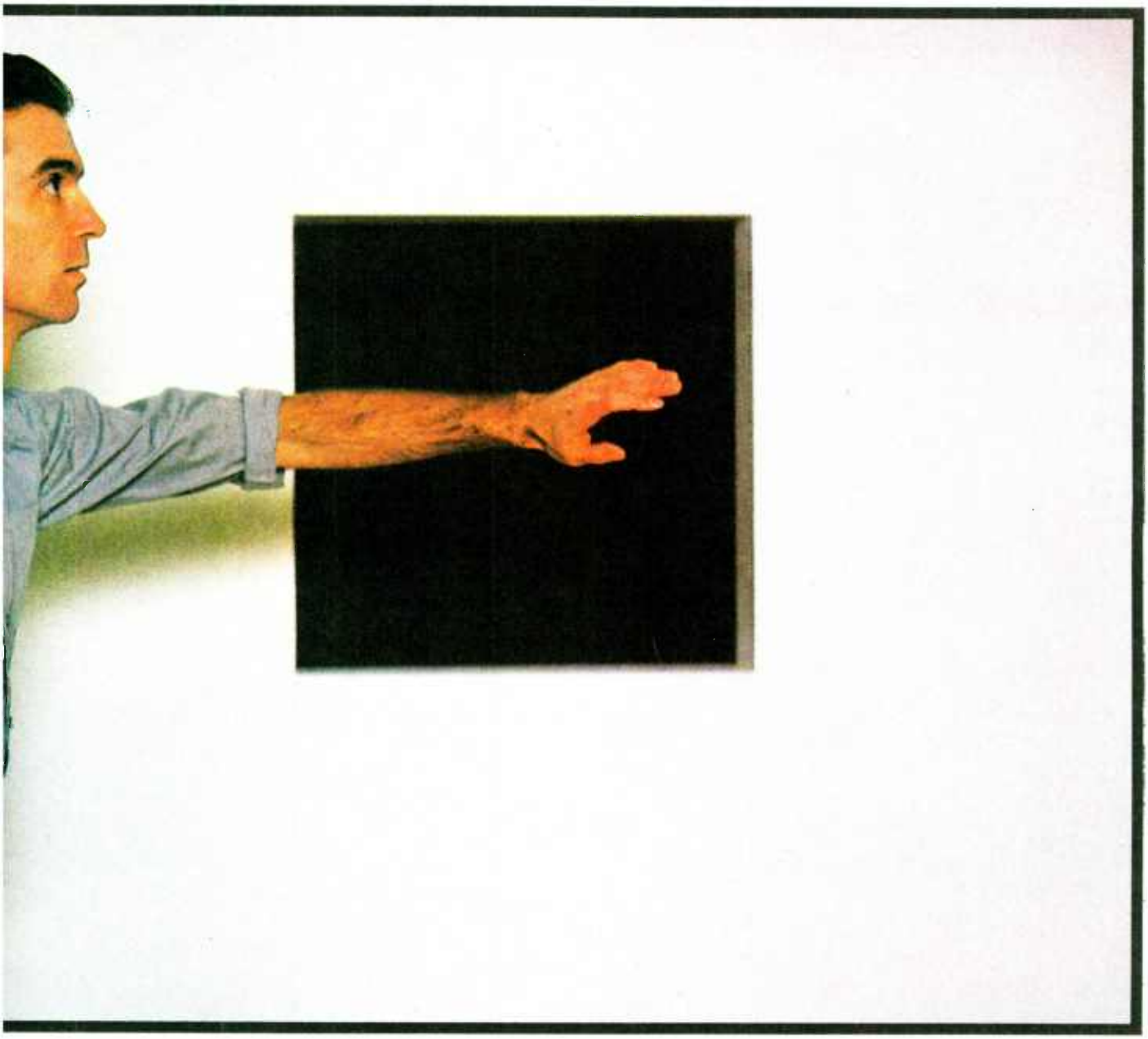
DEBORAH FEINGOLD

MUSICIAN: What kind of parallels do you draw between your music and your visual art?

BYRNE: The method, the working process can be real similar. I don't really know what the visual arts give me that music doesn't, or visa versa. I have noticed that they tend to feed back to each other, one into the other.

MUSICIAN: I know you used to do copier art with Xerox machines or whatever while at Rhode Island School of Design, and I wonder whether there's any connection between that activity and incorporating the "found" vocals in *Bush Of Ghosts* or your musical posture in general?

BYRNE: I did the copier art because I wanted my work to be easily accessible and not available only to the few people who could afford it. I also didn't want it to have that "aura" that fine art in galleries has—you know, don't touch 'cause this is *precious* stuff. Yes, a lot of that attitude carried over to the way I approach music. I didn't go into music to create something only a few people would like. I didn't try to make it incredibly commercial either, just not precious. As far as using the found vocals as "copies" of something, I've never made that connection myself [laughs] but maybe that's true though.



I've always felt there's more to something than exists on the surface. Even something like a landscape painting, the *way* in which it's done might make it about a lot more than just a landscape. Might be a whole way of looking at the world. Or take an ordinary, literal set of lyrics about a subject everybody knows. Real mundane, like a love song. But there are a whole lotta ways those lyrics can be dealt with: the phrasing, the choice of an odd word here or there, the texture of the music, the rhythm, can make it about something much more than just two lovers.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of phrasing, you get a lot of mileage out of unusual phrasing and insistently rhythmic phrasing on *Remain In Light*. One thing that comes to mind is the ungrammatical, almost pathetic, line in "Houses in Motion:" *She has closed her eyes she has given up hope.*

BYRNE: I got that right off the radio. That's exactly what the guy said, so I didn't change it. It sounded too nice the way it was. It sounded much sadder that way.

MUSICIAN: I know the incessant "And the heat goes on" chorus in "Born Under Punches (The Heat Goes On)" was lifted from a *New York Post* headline. And the four versus of "Once In A Lifetime" were taken right out of the mouths of preachers you'd heard. How much do you use found materials in developing your ideas and lyrics?

BYRNE: On and off a fair amount. Not all the time. Many times found materials are just a jumping off point or a way of getting some inspiration. They may put me in a frame of mind I wouldn't otherwise be in, and once I'm there I can write the rest of the lyrics myself.

MUSICIAN: Hey, I mean Picasso put news clippings into *his* African-influenced art, no reason why you shouldn't do it with yours.

BYRNE: [Great laughter.] Well the thing I like about using something like that is that the listener doesn't need to know that phrase came from a *Post* headline for it to work in the song. I think if you start working on songs where the listener has to be privy to some inside information then you get yourself in trouble. A lot of modern writing refers to other works for instance, and if you don't know them, then you're really left out in the cold. But I still think you can have stuff that refers to other things and comes from other sources, as long as it works by itself—as is—first. The other stuff is just icing on the cake.

MUSICIAN: It doesn't seem necessary to explain to your listeners that *Remain In Light* is based on African rhythms and sensibilities, yet you wrote a letter to all the critics explaining this very thing. How come?

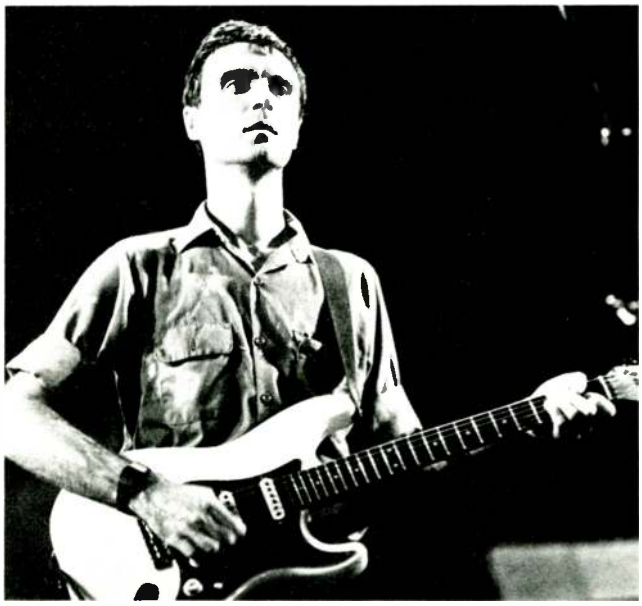
BYRNE: Because I wanted to have more interesting interviews. It was my way of saying, "These are the things I want to talk about." I thought the letter was a way to push the critics in that direction, that they'd write more interesting reviews.

MUSICIAN: Don't you think a helluva lot of the critics might have taken the record as a plain, ole funk album if you hadn't indicated where all this stuff was coming from, including which books on African art?

BYRNE: I can't tell if that would have happened. Could be. I wouldn't have been surprised. As it was, I wasn't surprised by the favorable press it got because when I finished it I thought, "Gee, this is a good record . . . I think." But I always felt wary, I thought maybe they're all gonna jump on us for this—for doing something we're not *supposed* to be doing. [Laughs] Now if they all had hated it, I guess I might think twice about it.

MUSICIAN: Alright David, tell me about the White Man's Burden?

BYRNE: In the modern musical equivalent the white man goes



EBET ROBERTS

into the "primitive" culture of Afro-America or Africa or Brazil and extracts the black music—"improves" it to continue the metaphor—for a white audience that won't listen to it or go hear it played by black people. Or as Hugh Masekela put it, African music won't catch on in the States until some producer gets four British boys to learn Swahili.

BYRNE: I understand what you're saying. Now in our case, the band is currently half-black. But I know the same audience wouldn't come if it was just Bernie Busta Dolette, Steven and Nona. We tried to be a little more sensible about all that. A big difference between what we're doing and what many have done in the past—as you've described it—is that they never gave credit to their sources. If nothing else, we've given credit to everybody we've been inspired by—be it African or the Funkadelics or whomever. That's important. The issue you raise is a difficult one . . .

MUSICIAN: Have you been drawing an integrated audience to your concerts?

BYRNE: It's real slow for that to happen. There were a lot of Latin kids at our Central Park show. It's happening a little bit, but a lot less than we would like. I'll be disappointed if it doesn't begin happening more. A lot of it has to do with radio airplay.

MUSICIAN: Certainly the new record has even less of a chance for airplay. In any case, how did you run across Amos Tutuola's novel, *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts?*

BYRNE: We had run across references to the book in other books on African culture—a lot of which were very scholarly—and I finally found it at City Lights bookstore in San Francisco. Previous to that, I just thought, "Gee, what a great title." And the book didn't disappoint me, it was all you'd expect from a book with that title.

MUSICIAN: There are many passages about song and dance and fear and joy throughout the story, and one in particular struck me as strongly reflective of *your* story—going as you have from the anxiety and dread that characterized Talking Heads through *Fear Of Music* to the much more affirmative attitude of *Remain In Light*. The narrator says, "I forgot all my sorrow and started to sing the earthly songs which sorrow prevented me from singing about."

BYRNE: Yes, that's a very nice quote. I think I understand what that means. I feel less afraid of many things now, feel more confident. And I think the music was important in that: it demanded a completely different attitude. The anxiety of my lyrics and my singing didn't seem appropriate for this kind of music; this music is more positive, though a little mysterious at the same time. So it was important that I wrote lyrics that also had these qualities.

MUSICIAN: Was it a matter of changing your constructed persona or of actually going through a transformation yourself?

BYRNE: It was a matter of writing from a different part of my personality, one that didn't come out much in our earlier stuff. People's personalities have more than one facet. Gee, the audience must be fair and let the artist deal with more than one side of his personality. I know this can be tricky in the music business; people get used to a person's songs being from one point of view and then they identify him as such. They tend to identify the actor with the part he's playing. I mean: the villains of soap operas have been attacked on the street for being so rotten. But most people have more than one side of them.

MUSICIAN: Sometimes the problem for listeners is deciphering whether the personality the artist presents is truly himself or herself, and how much is unadulterated affectation. Take the U.S. version of punkdom, for instance.

BYRNE: Yeah, only now perhaps in some of the "surf punk" bands in L.A. do you find punks who are really punks: Mean as Hell, and not just the creators of an interesting persona.

MUSICIAN: Do you think of the voices on *Bush Of Ghosts* as ghosts?

BYRNE: No. But I think of the music on the record as very spiritual, so you might connect that with ghosts.

MUSICIAN: How spiritual?

BYRNE: It's difficult to explain. I think it's a combination of the rhythms and the more mysterious textures and sounds. Like *Remain In Light*, there's a positive, affirmative feeling there but then there's also a mysterious, other-wordly feeling. Almost all the vocals we put on it have to do with one kind of religious experience or another . . .

MUSICIAN: Which in a couple of cases intersect with current political experiences, like with the "unidentified indignant radio host" railing against our lack of nerve in the you-know-what crisis, and on the other side of the coin, you include Algerian Muslims chanting Qu'ran. Where did you get the "Unidentified exorcist" vocal to take Kuhlman's place?

BYRNE: Right off the radio. It was a phone-in show, people called in to have this guy drive off the evil spirits. There's another guy in California who has you put your hands on the T.V. screen and he puts out his hands to touch yours and heal you through the T.V.

MUSICIAN: Can you imagine yourself in a similar role?

BYRNE: What, telling people to put their hands on the set?

MUSICIAN: C'mon David, you know what I mean . . .

BYRNE: Helping to heal people? Preaching? Yeah, in a way. I get a lot of inspiration from the evangelists one hears on the

radio throughout the U.S. I *think* they're dealing with a similar aesthetic; in the more exciting preaching I think they're going after a thing similar to the music. But I'm just not very direct about it. I like to plant just the seed of an idea in someone's head rather than telling him exactly what I think.

MUSICIAN: With a lot of those testifyin' preachers, there seems to be a contradiction—or a tension—between what they're actually saying and the way they're saying it.

BYRNE: Yes, sometimes there is. Sometimes their delivery is real ecstactic, but what they're saying is so conservative and moralistic. It's hard to reconcile the fact that these guys are going absolutely berserk while they're telling everyone to behave themselves. And they're madly raving, jumping all over the place. In that kind of preaching—like in a music piece—as much is said in the delivery and the phrasing as in the words. Sometimes, what's important isn't what's literally being said.

MUSICIAN: Let's take the words from *Remain In Light* for example. They were after-thoughts, second thoughts, side thoughts etc. you jotted down and all the critics are gonna spend 10,000 words explaining them . . .

BYRNE: Well yeah, because I don't completely understand what I've done. I have definite ideas about which phrase is right for a line and which is not, but I couldn't tell why. Some of my choices don't make sense in any logical way, I just have an intuitive sense about them. Only later, after the critics have explained it all to me or enough time has gone by, do I have a general idea of what I was trying to say.

MUSICIAN: Did you find that the pieces were writing you instead of visa versa?

BYRNE: Yeah, I find that's true with a lot of music. It's generally thought it's the singer who puts the emotion into the song, but I think more often it's the other way around—it's the music which brings the emotion out of the singer. A piece of music, if it's exciting, demands a certain response from the vocalist, and the *music* brings out those emotions.

MUSICIAN: Now that some time has gone by, how do you feel about them?

BYRNE: I still think my voice is a little shrill when I talk or preach or whatever. That could be improved; it needs to have a deeper, richer quality, and I need to stop clipping my words and phrases as much as I do. I know you're thinking gosh what about the words? I still haven't tried to figure them out, but they work as I intended them to. They have that implied religious, spiritual feeling. *Implied*, but not stated. I wanted to get a spiritual ambience in the words.

MUSICIAN: Tom Wolfe's great phrase for the '70s, "The Me Decade and The Third Great Awakening" somehow got shortened and secularized into just "The Me Decade." But it seems your new emphasis on spirituality is very much a part of our society's great awakening.

BYRNE: Yeah. I'm part of the same society so I'm probably part of the same phenomenon. The fact that our music implies a different kind of social order was sort of a way out for me, a way out of all the predicaments our society has gotten itself into. It's made me optimistic about things, it's been very rewarding to see how things work out on a musical level—we've achieved more by collaborating and cooperating than we could have achieved by everyone asserting their individuality. It's exciting.

MUSICIAN: Maoist Pop?

BYRNE: Yes, and one of the things that was so exciting was that it wasn't just the theory that was good or moral, but that everyone shared in the ecstatic experience when it worked. It wasn't like we all got together to build a house or anything; working together was its own reward. And the reward was spontaneous. This music has helped me, helped make me optimistic, gave me faith in human beings a little bit, whereas if I was to just read the headlines everyday, I MIGHT WRITE REAL NIHILISTIC SONGS.

MUSICIAN: You couldn't write another *Buildings And Food* record if you tried?

BYRNE: It would be sort of hard. It's just not something I'm inclined to do anymore. But I get wary of talking about the spirituality thing. There's all these rock stars who have gone mystic, you know, Bob Dylan has found Jesus and gone soft or whatever . . .

MUSICIAN: Don't worry, we won't cast you as the Jerry Falwell of Afro-funk. But on those first three records, you were writing lyrics from all sorts of different viewpoints, contradictory or otherwise. I mean: there were so many points of view, it was almost like Value Relativism—nothing is better or worse than anything else. In retrospect, wasn't this a bit of a cul-de-sac for you?

BYRNE: In a way, yeah. Because if you get too far into that, then you start thinking of all the possible ways of looking at something and you'll never be able to make a decision about it. For instance, let's say you're driving down the street and see a billboard, and you try to decide: should that be there or shouldn't that be there? There're so many different ways you can look at it: you could say it's an ugly object obscuring nature, or you can say it's a beautiful object because it says so much about our society. In the process, you'll never be able to make a decision. You can reason and reason. Which is fun, but it's mental masturbation, you can get stuck after awhile.

EBET ROBERTS

I think I'm out of that phase. I think in a way I was driven into it because people tended to identify me by the songs I wrote, and say, "That's what he's like." So I thought, "Okay, I'll show 'em, I'll write one from the opposite point of view!" And so on. It was a challenge. But I've stopped doing that now.

MUSICIAN: How has it been working with Eno?

BYRNE: Fine, fine. I don't know what I'll do in the future though. We have tentative plans to work on another record together. I don't know what it would be like. We didn't even know what *Bush Of Ghosts* would end up like when we started. The whole record, like *Remain In Light*, was composed in the studio. That technique eliminates the problem of trying to get a texture, a sound you've developed while rehearsing, onto the tape. Instead, by composing in the studio you get the sound first *and then* decide where and how you can fit it in. Once you've got it on tape you can never lose it—you don't have to try recreating it again. Not that there weren't days when we tried a bunch of things in the studio and most of them didn't work, and I'd come back home thinking, "Wow, what a waste of time. Lost it I guess."

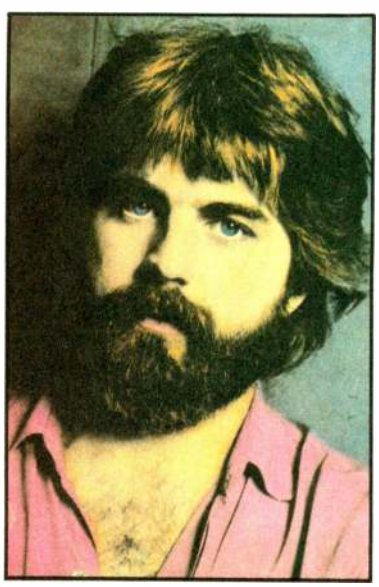
MUSICIAN: He had given up hope?

BYRNE: Naw.

MICHAEL McDONALD

Songwriter, keyboardist, arranger, member of the Doobies and owner of The Voice reveals himself as a somewhat reluctant superstar. Thrust into pop music's center stage by his Top 40/AOR masterpieces, McDonald traces his roots back to some surprising sources.

By Sam Sutherland



NORMAN SEEF

Michael McDonald has come to influence contemporary pop through a deceptively indirect path. For most listeners, that process began on record where he cast an aural shadow across other backing vocalists, his rich tenor infusing the sleeker voices around it with a blue wash of feeling. His first significant studio association, as a member of Steely Dan's last semi-formal working band, prefigured not only McDonald's own catalogue of pop, rock and soul-inflected songs written for and with the Doobie Brothers, but a virtual subgenre of late '70s popular vocal records. Many have borne that stamp through his collaboration as singer, song-writer, arranger or producer; still others have evolved in the hands of musical friends; and, more recently, several have paid him the ultimate commercial compliment — outright imitation.

McDonald joined the Doobies in 1975 as keyboard player and vocalist, replacing an ailing Tom Johnson. Teamed with another former Steely Dan member, guitarist Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, McDonald accelerated the Doobies' swing away from guitar rock toward a seamless, urban pop synthesis. It was a stylistic shift he would often be given sole credit or blame for, despite the music's clear genesis in the work of Baxter and veteran Doobie Patrick Simmons as well. All three helped shepherd the band away from the classic rock superstructure of massed rhythm arrangements and extended, high-relief solo instrumental lines; their subsequent emphasis has been on refining a more elastic ensemble style at once cooler in its refined accents and subtler harmonic blueprint, and more dynamic in its use of rhythmic punctuation.

As the band's tacit co-leader, together with guitarist Simmons, McDonald has since become more comfortable in that role, if not exactly outspoken. Any traces of the narcissism common to his trade remain offset by grassroots attitudes. He retains a healthy distrust of praise, a candid grasp of his own limitations as a musician, and a determination to resist the fish-bowl pressures of his popularity by remaining approachable. Above all, he refuses to fully detach his work from the supportive context of the band he credits with nurturing it, and the various singers and songwriters McDonald has collaborated with.

That openness also attests to his origins. Growing up in a climate where music was neither mere background noise nor formal system, but rather an integral part of daily life, McDonald still remembers his scuffling days. If he now writes with peers and predecessors ranging from Carly Simon and Kenny Loggins to Burt Bacharach and Paul Anka, he still expresses affection for the forgotten bands that brought his first performing experience, outfits with names like Mike and the Majestics, Jerry and the Sheratons, the Del-Rays and Blue.

Norman, Oklahoma, the next-to-last stop on a late summer

RICHARD AARON

leg of the Doobies' current tour, proves an unexpectedly appropriate rendezvous. Its plains are baking beneath 100-degree heat and 90 percent humidity even in late afternoon, as the band prepares to take the stage at the University's Owen Stadium, climaxing an afternoon rock triple-bill. By the time the stage is ready and the band begins heading up the ramps, the weather has induced a torpor that makes even breathing, let alone performing, seem folly indeed.

Before going onstage, McDonald will wonder aloud whether we've picked a good day to hear the current eight-man stage ensemble, but by the end of the set his question will have been answered in the affirmative. With Willie Weeks handling bassist Tiran Porter's duties onstage, and drummers Keith Knudsen and Chet McCracken augmented by frequent studio and stage percussionist Bobby LaKind, the rhythm section is both fluid and precise, summoning the thundercrack power of the early '70s band's trademarked twin-kit bottom, while capturing the broader dynamic range and sinuous percussive accents that have spiced its more recent style.

Simmons, long an exuberant front man, has found his first onstage foil since Johnston's departure in guitarist John McFee (Clover, Elvis Costello, Carlene Carter, Van Morrison). The two guitarists trade ebullient solos and playful, cross-stage sprints, and if McFee doesn't bring the same elliptical chromatic filigree that Baxter offered, he makes up for it with his own rich harmonics and a single-note soloing attack just as lusty.

Finally, McDonald himself, always relatively static behind his keyboards, has found his own music foil in Cornelius Bumpus. Bumpus' own band, Corny and The Corvettes, had led to a guest slot in a mid-decade reformation of Moby Grape (itself one of the original Doobies' main influences), and subsequently earned him an audition with McDonald and Simmons. His surging Hammond organ fills, ripe saxophone lines and gospel-edged vocals all complement McDonald's own roots and provide the band with the added depth their last few albums have achieved through outside players.

Overall, their set is a stylish, successful compromise between the pop gloss of their recent studio work and the high-energy concert drama generated by the earlier Brothers, but often lacking in recent tours. Vocally, the current lineup is easily the strongest to date, with four solo vocalists in Bumpus, Simmons, Knudsen and McDonald, and a lush choral blend.

After the show, McDonald worries only momentarily whether his pitch was off (it wasn't), and is visibly relaxed. So, in a dimly-lit steak house halfway to Oklahoma City, he drinks ice water from a Mason jar and begins reviewing the vocal and instrumental models that carried him here.

MUSICIAN: You started singing as a child, didn't you?
McDONALD: Yeah, I've been in bands since I was about 12, actually, and before that I sang with my father. I was four the first time he ever put me up on a piano, in a bar, to sing. It was something I've loved to do ever since then.

I always sang, because my father had, and my whole family loved singing — even if they couldn't sing, they sang. It was a real strong thing in my family. A lot of their reason for getting together was music, they just loved music. And I grew up raised by barflies. None of them really drank very much; my uncles drank, but my father didn't. He loved to sing with the piano players, and my mother and everybody used to love it. That was their evening out: Friday and Saturday night, they'd

go down to a local bar in St. Louis, Eddie Baker's City Club, which is where I first sang. The kids were welcome, and it was a typical scene in those places, those corner bars, you know.

MUSICIAN: St. Louis itself has to figure in your music, in that it's had a long musical history of its own as kind of hub city for other regional styles, especially black ones. What were you hearing as you grew up there?

MCDONALD: Well, basically music from Chicago, music from Memphis, a lot of music from Nashville—a lot of country and western. St. Louis was caught right in the middle of those cities. It seems like in the '50s, the record companies were more local.

MUSICIAN: Apart from other players locally, or records you liked, what singers first really affected you?

McDONALD: I always loved Ray Charles. I always thought he was an incredible vocalist. And I grew up singing old songs. I'd sing a lot of old Irish songs, old World War I songs, and I got into music through that. I also had an affection for show tunes, for Oscar Hammerstein and people like that.

MUSICIAN: What about your keyboard training? When did you start playing?

McDONALD: All my life, really. I played by ear. But my only interest in it was to write songs: I never really strived to become a piano player. Then, when I joined the Doobies, I felt I had to.

MUSICIAN: One common feature to your tracks has been the use of stacked keyboard textures, building up chorus effects with electric piano, acoustic piano and occasionally synthesizers or effect units. What attracted you to that approach?

McDONALD: I pretty much got into that through recording, through hearing it on tape and liking the sound of it. Being the keyboard player in a four-piece group, a lot of times it would take on the same feeling as a horn section—it wasn't just a keyboard, it was more orchestrated than that.

When people found more ways for more groups to have a bigger sound, it became more of an orchestrated thing. One of the first ways I think that came together was not so much through synthesizers but electric piano. I'll still sometimes use a Rhodes / piano combination before I'll use any kind of synthesizer.

MUSICIAN: Well, I noticed with your stage set-up, for example, that there were any number of times you could've tried for a given effect with a synthesizer, but instead you used pedal or tone effects on either the Rhodes or the Yamaha electronic grand.

McDONALD: Because of the harmonics caused by the two different keyboards. There are all these harmonics that I can't even account for that sound really big and resilient, that you can't get from a wave-form synthesizer. You just don't have enough oscillators to build all those harmonics and make that sound. Sometimes two keyboards will make the sound much fatter, and at the same time much richer, than you could ever get on a synthesizer.

MUSICIAN: How long have you been on the West Coast?

McDONALD: I moved out when I was 18, and sort of left the Midwest behind, coming out to do that solo album with Rick Jarrard, who produced it for RCA. It never got released, and things just kind of fell through for us.

MUSICIAN: You were more interested in just being a writer?

McDONALD: I think so, and just being in a good rock 'n' roll band. I enjoyed being in a good rhythm section. But it was hard for me to learn how to follow that basic instinct, and just accept the fact that just because it's not the normal thing to strive for, it's still worth doing.

I'm not a performer, and never will be. I don't enjoy it, and with my personal makeup, I don't have to get out there.

MUSICIAN: In other words, the ego need isn't there.

McDONALD: Yeah. Not that that's bad. There are people who do it well, I just never did. So, after a couple of years of regrouping myself, and finding out what I wanted to do, I still felt the need for music to be my whole life.

MUSICIAN: But you're finally going to do that solo album.

McDONALD: Now I want to do a solo album because I feel, as a writer and vocalist, I can do one. Being a part of the Doobie Brothers will always satisfy any live commitments I might ever have, though. I could always do one of my tunes in their show, and I'm sure the guys wouldn't care.

It's a rough one, I'll tell you that. It's a much bigger thing I'm biting off than I thought it was when I first went in to do it.

MUSICIAN: To focus on the writing, though, I'm interested in hearing more about the writers you've liked over the years.

McDONALD: See, a lot of my idols as a kid were the guys who sat around writing songs. I didn't idolize Elvis Presley. I *liked* Elvis Presley. . . .

MUSICIAN: But you would've preferred *meeting* Lieber and Stoller?

McDONALD: Yeah. Well, I was more into Rodgers and Hammerstein, or Aaron Neville or Cole Porter. I was very into Allen Toussaint, and people like him who weren't really known for their performing, but for the music they made.

MUSICIAN: At this point in your career, some observers might expect you to write alone, yet you continue to collaborate, and to try new partnerships, like those you're now exploring with Patrick Henderson and with Burt Bacharach.

McDONALD: Well, that's helped me tremendously. Working with other writers has been a real saving grace for me, because what happens to you is that you get very insulated, very introspective. And it's something that happens to somebody when they have, quote, success. I never had to try as hard as I do now; I always felt like someone on the outside looking in, listening to everything. It was easier to take it in.

MUSICIAN: What about specific partnerships? As I recall, you wrote "You Belong to Me" with Carly Simon as a kind of transcontinental effort — you never worked directly together.

McDONALD: We literally never even spoke to each other in the whole time that we wrote that song. Teddy had said that Carly really wanted to write with me, when I went to work on one of her albums. It was typical studio rhetoric: "You call my service, I'll call your service," and a lot of times nothing ever comes of it.

But I gave a cassette of the track to Teddy, who sent it to her, and she sent back lyrics. We did the song, and it wasn't until she released the song herself a year later that I even spoke to her about it. I felt funny about that.

MUSICIAN: How do you and Kenny Loggins work as a team?

McDONALD: When Kenny and I work, it's pretty much what you'd imagine: we sit at the piano and it's like the old Tin Pan Alley approach, line after line. From that point on, it's over the phone, over dinner — we'll write songs under the most obscure circumstances. But that's the nature of a song.

MUSICIAN: Does that description apply to team efforts within the Doobies?

McDONALD: With Patrick and Keith, we're together a lot, so our writing together is kind of a natural exercise. We just wind up collaborating a lot on each other's songs, and we don't even always distribute the credit.

MUSICIAN: What about your more recent work with Burt Bacharach, Paul Anka and Carole Bayer Sager. Those writers are associated more with softer mainstream pop. Does anyone around you have fears that these partnerships will carry you toward too soft a style?

McDONALD: Well it comes down to a few things. I'm a songwriter, and living in L.A., being used to the scene as far as working in the studios and in concerts, that whole syndrome of what is or isn't hip is something you can't really take too seriously. Because, for me, it's got to come down to the fact that Burt Bacharach has to be the best there ever was. He's as good as any contemporary songwriter ever was, since American pop music took on its own form and influence. He's not just another writer.

MUSICIAN: What do you think he derives from you? A certain feel for newer styles?

McDONALD: Yeah, When I first met Burt, we wound up in his

apartment in New York and he was so eager to work with me. I think he saw me as one of the Doobies, and he likes the band, which is a huge compliment. Because, for one, he couldn't be a bigger influence on me. It's funny. You find a guy like Burt, who's had such a hold on Top 40 music and on pop ten years ago, and now he's viewed as a sort of laid-back, out of the mainstream. Yet the effects of Burt Bacharach are still felt everytime you turn on the radio. The influence, the changes in pop song structure over the last ten years, they're still there. It's the same thing with the Beatles, in that the effect they had was so strong on their time that everything is affected by it now, even if you don't readily see it. Burt, to me, is one of those kind of forces.

MUSICIAN: You mentioned that you felt outside. That seems consistent with your continued love of older pop forms, which were considered decidedly unhip in a rock generation. Yet with the Doobies, you've found rock-trained collaborators willing to explore these other areas. Do you feel they should receive more of an equal credit in your writing?

McDONALD: Oh, definitely. You know, Ted Templeman has a lot to do with the arrangement of our songs, too, from a very basic level.

MUSICIAN: You've said that much of your writing and the band's as well starts with a musical sketch, with lyrics generally added last.

McDONALD: Before we ever go in. Ted is a huge input factor in the writing of all our songs. In many instances he walks us through them to the finishing touches, just in his objective knowledge and his ability to perceive what you do and what he thinks you're trying to do.

MUSICIAN: So he's not just deciding how much echo to put on the mix or where to pan a solo.

McDONALD: Right. There's all those different schools out there of producing, and that rare grass roots kind. And the guy is extremely bright, extremely organized. I mean, I thought he was from the Young Republicans when I first met him, and all of a sudden you're in the studio with the guy and he's just kind of wrassling around. It breaks down to total chaos at times, when we're going for ideas.

MUSICIAN: In your own writing, certain features do stand out. You're a very rhythm-oriented writer, not only from the standpoint of how you play, but also in how you handle the interplay of lyric and melody. You tend to avoid classic 4/4 patterns and lines that stay within the bar; instead, you'll often delay a line's entry, then stretch it over bar lines, making those rhythmic values work against each other instead of just riding on top of each other.

McDONALD: It's something I've always like about songs I'd heard. That poly-rhythm thing, a rhythm pattern imposed on another rhythm pattern. It, to me, frees up a song. But it's hard for me to really analyze too much, because it's something I fell into, to be quite honest with you. Just from "It Keeps You Runnin' " on, and from working with Steely Dan, it was something that was very obvious to me about their stuff. And I was very influenced by them, you know.

MUSICIAN: How much freedom did you have as a singer? Did they give you detailed vocal arrangements, or just harmonic sketches you and the other singers would build parts around?

McDONALD: Honestly, as a vocalist with Steely Dan I don't think I was allowed the freedom that some of the instrumentalists were because by the time you're putting background vocals on, it's a distinct color and a certain function you're doing.

MUSICIAN: What about the vocal tags you sang on songs like "Kid Charlemagne," where you really rose out of the mix?

McDONALD: Those are moments of freedom under the iron rule of Donald and Walter [Becker]. [Laughing] You know, it's a real pleasure working for them, though, because the music just goes without saying.

Donald is real interesting because he is very detailed in his background parts, and I've learned a lot from him. The way he writes them, a lot of times there are very close harmonies, not big chords. Small chords, three notes with relationships one step apart in the chord. A chord they're kind of famous for is that C triad starting on the D, where it's D, E, G.

MUSICIAN: As opposed to standard thirds, fifths and octaves.

McDONALD: Or a full ninth chord spelled out. Burt Bacharach, again, that's something he's known for: spelling out an A chord the way you'd never really heard an A chord spelled out, behind the chord it just came out of.

MUSICIAN: Your Steely Dan connection shows in other ways, too. One compositional technique you share with them is a broader approach to harmony, and a subtler use of keys, than most rock bands would attempt.

McDONALD: Yeah, well, as a band we got kind of jazzed about relative keys. We couldn't seem to write enough in that area.

ETTY INMAN/RETNA LTD

I think it effects you emotionally — you feel like you've been lifted into a higher key, when it's all the same notes. On "What A Fool Believes," that was probably the biggest thing people picked up on, that kick into the chorus. Where the tune started off in C sharp, it somehow — and I don't really know how, because it just came by accident one night when Loggins and I were up late, writing — wound up in the key of E.

MUSICIAN: With the profile you've had in recent years not only through Doobies' hits, but as a singer or writing partner on other people's records, some people have raised questions about you risking overexposure. Is that a real threat to you?

McDONALD: It worries me if what I'm doing now is the most I'm ever going to grow with. Then it would be obvious to the public, probably long before it was ever obvious to the press or radio ro the record company. Because I have a lot more faith in the public than most people give them.

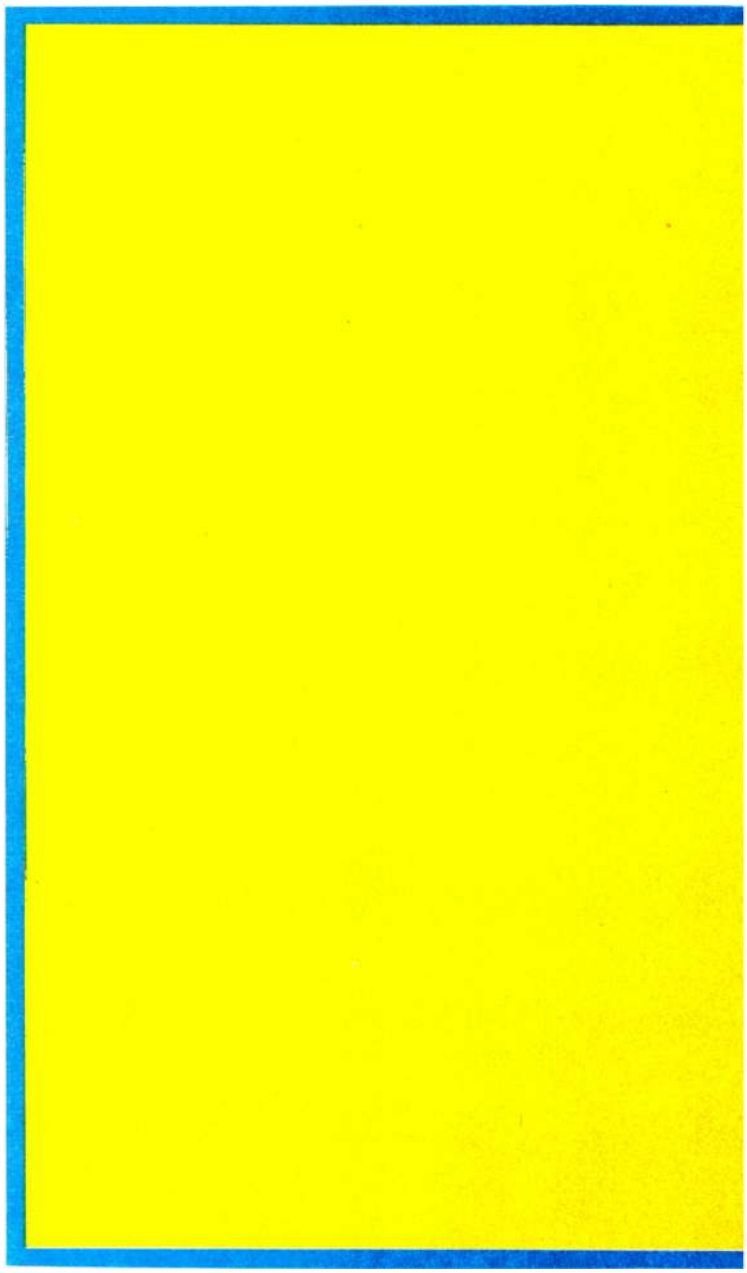
If I stop growing, I could do all kinds of things and it would still be obvious. Hopefully, that won't happen. People two and three years ago were telling me, "You're already overexposed with the Steely Dan stuff alone." Then there was the Doobies, and the Tim Moore album, and I don't know how many others I worked on. I was overexposed then, but I've had the chance to work with some brilliant people of some really great music.

STEVE WINWOOD

THE ANATOMY OF A RETIREMENT • THE MAKINGS OF A COMEBACK

Stevie Winwood, superstar to one musical era and survivor and student in another, reflects on the flow of Traffic, the dangers of Blind Faith, the simple pleasures of solo art and the diver's art, and life in the limelight without illusions.

By Vic Garbarini



Ever since the ancient Egyptians were hit with seven years of famine after squandering an equal period of plenty, there's been a persistent tradition that events follow an alternating cycle of seven good years, followed by seven bad. Things *do* seem to happen in 7s: seven days of the week; the Saturn cycle in astrology; Gurdjieff's Law of Sevenfoldness; seven notes in the octave, *The Return of the (Magnificent) Seven* (The original was better). The idea is to be in synch with the rhythms, to go with the tide during the good times and drop back and punt during the lean. Why buck the cosmos? After all, it's not nice to fool Mother Nature, and it may be downright unhealthy. Stevie Winwood's unusual career seems to provide a textbook illustration of just that phenomenon. After 7 years of relatively Garboesque retreat since the breakup of Traffic (a band which he formed exactly seven years earlier, after leaving The Spencer Davis Group), Winwood seems about to begin another active phase of his career with the release of his second solo album, *Arc Of A Diver*. It wasn't as if he'd gone into hibernation after 74's *When The Eagle Flies* — he'd lent his name to a number of projects and collaborations during that period, including a live performance with a very hot salsa group, the Fania All Stars, (with whom he also later recorded). He also participated in the Stomu Yamashta/Mike Shreive/Winwood collaboration Go, and his first solo effort *Steve Winwood*, as well as occasional session work with the likes of Marianne Faithful, George Harrison, Sandy Denny and Gong. Still, one couldn't help but feel that the man was merely marking time. The Go albums were, at best, avant garde for the easy listening set, The *Winwood* solo effort pleasantly workmanlike — relaxed but not soporific. Treading water. There was nothing to match the youthful passion and exuberance of "Gimme Some Lovin", the stark beauty of *John Barleycorn*, or the eclectic synthesis of rock, jazz, blues, and folk that was early Traffic. *Arc Of A Diver* may not be the equal of *Mr. Fantasy* either, but that's not the point. It's a solo album in the purest sense of the word, with Winwood responsible for virtually every instrumental and vocal sound on the album. Mono and poly synthesizers predominate over keyboards and guitars, though as with most projects of this nature there's an awkward stiffness to some of the tracks, the inevitable price of doing it yourself. But there's also a change in spirit here that bodes well for the future. Neither

the lean pathos of *Barleycorn* nor the smoky narcolepsy of *Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys* are evident here; instead, there's a prevailing feeling of hope and optimism, heralded by the opening cuts' stirring melody and technicolor wash of synthesizer. "Night Train"'s cheerful funk and "Slowdown Sundown"'s graceful chorus prove his sense of rhythm and melody is as strong as ever, and his synthesizer explorations, while technically unspectacular, show he's still willing to take risks and grow. His announcement that he's forming a band and planning a tour for later this year is a further indication that Stevie is wanting to take the plunge back into the marketplace. *Arc Of A Diver* may not be the comeback album many of us have been waiting for, but it does mark a significant turning point: the re-emergence of a major artist. What happens after this is up to him. And the cosmos.

MUSICIAN: What was it like being 16 and suddenly becoming a popstar?

WINWOOD: Well, it was pretty intense, but probably not in the way you think. In those days '65, '66, success was judged not by how many records you sold, but by how many nights a week you were on the road doing gigs. We'd start off on the Birmingham club circuit, then developed and went wider, covered the London clubs, universities, theatres, ballrooms — it just kept building up in such a way that I never had the chance to reap the benefits of what one calls stardom. I remember sitting in a van on the motorway travelling to the next gig and staring at the road thinking *"So this is stardom, is* it? Ah . . . I don't understand what everyone sees in it . . ." So in the early days the work was quite intense, but not the benefits. But I think I was lucky in that it didn't seem to have a great psychological effect on me for the worse.

MUSICIAN: Were you ever frightened that it might get out of hand, or overwhelm you?

WINWOOD: No, because the progression was pretty gradual. There was no drastic change in our day to day reality when we started to make it. We were already playing seven nights a week. What could they do, make us play *eight?* All that happened was that the venues held more people, and from the musicians' point of view — from the stage — there isn't that much difference between a packed club of 500 in Birmingham and 5 or 10 thousand in a theatre in London.

You're still doing the same thing you were doing in the club in Birmingham, there's just a few more people. But then the lights are much brighter so you can't *see* as many people as you could in the club! So it pretty much evens out in the end.

MUSICIAN: What was recording like with Spencer Davis? Was it pretty primitive?

WINWOOD: Oh yeah, [laughing]! The first recording we made was actually a demo. At the time I had no ideas what a demo was, so as far as I was concerned this was it—this was recording. It was pretty bewildering!

MUSICIAN: What about your vocal style. How did an English teenager develop this incredible white R&B vocal style? How much of it was imitating influences, and how much was natural to you?

WINWOOD: I never really tried to sing in any particular style, but at a fairly early age, around the late 50's or early 60's, I began to listen to early rock like Carl Perkins, Buddy Holly, Elvis—especially his early songs like "Hound Dog." I also got into some folk and country, a bit of jazz . . .

MUSICIAN: I'm surprised you haven't mentioned Ray Charles yet.

WINWOOD: Ray Charles came a bit later, probably two or three years after that. Suddenly I heard this incredible voice, and I really didn't listen to much else after that.

MUSICIAN: Did you consciously try to imitate his singer style. Did you feel "Well, I'm coming out of this tradition," the way say, Clapton and the Stones were obviously coming out of the old bluesmen like Muddy Waters and Son House?

WINWOOD: Yeah, it was the kind of thing that . . . one was so *moved* by that kind of music—whether you were coming out of that tradition or not—that you couldn't help but want to do it yourself. It's a juvenile thing, I guess; you just have to emulate something that you believe in and that really moves you.

MUSICIAN: The early Spencer Davis material seemed to be a mixture of straight ahead pop, R&B, and classical blues. How did that evolve?

WINWOOD: We really hadn't started writing in the beginning, we were mostly doing R&B covers in those days. Our early hits like "Keep On Runnin" and "Somebody Help Me" were written by an outsider—Jackie Edwards. So by covering these certain types of records we gradually developed our own identity.

MUSICIAN: So the pop stream and the R&B stream eventually converged and you wrote your first original hit . . .

WINWOOD: "Gimme' Some Lovin'," right. We were just playing around, jamming one day and we realized we'd got something, and so I went home and wrote the words and arrived at a melody.

MUSICIAN: I think "I'm A Man" was the next big one you wrote. Was that the same kind of process?

WINWOOD: Yeah, that was a similar kind of thing, except the lyrics were written by Jimmy Miller. "I'm A Man" was the very last thing that happened before I left the group.

MUSICIAN: Why did you leave at that point?

WINWOOD: A number of reasons: I really didn't want to get stuck in a rhythm and blues thing, for one. There was also a big age difference in the group, and I had met a group of people I wanted to try something different with.

MUSICIAN: Did you have a vision of what Traffic would be? A kind of synthesis of different genres?

WINWOOD: Right, that was it. We wanted to create something that had no name, that couldn't be immediately pegged as R&B, or country or jazz or whatever. We took pleasure in listening to the most diverse types of music possible. Otis Redding, for example, classical music like Ravel . . .

MUSICIAN: What about jazz?

WINWOOD: Well, we were a job wary of jazz at the time of Traffic, because that was slightly . . . old music to us, but obviously we'd been listening to people like Coltrane, Miles, Mingus, Ornette Coleman. But during Traffic we tended to gravitate towards jazz musicians who worked with popular song forms, like Louis Jordan and Bill Doggett.

MUSICIAN: That period around '67 and '68 seemed to be an incredibly open and creative time in Britain. There was a great deal of high caliber experimentation, wasn't there?

WINWOOD: Steady on, lad! Time mellows memories a bit, you know. You might say that it was special, but there was also some bad stuff going on at the same time. But yes, there was a kind of awakening and expansion happening. But in my opinion nothing more really came out of that period than any other, it was just viewed in a different way. Look at the period just before, when you had Elvis and Little Richard and Fats Domino, that was fantastic too.

MUSICIAN: True, but there wasn't that synthsis of styles that came later on.

WINWOOD: Yes, it was a breakdown of tradition, wasn't? And not just in music—it was happening everywhere, in art, and painting too.

MUSICIAN: Did you see yourselves as iconoclasts, breaking down tradition?

WINWOOD: Not really. I think that tradition is a very important base for any art form, and shouldn't be tossed out the window. If it is, it's only for an effect. In Traffic we were very involved with trying to use them in a different way, to blend different traditions in a new way.

MUSICIAN: When you started Traffic, you all left the city and moved to a cottage in Berkshire. Why did you want to work in the country?

WINWOOD: There were several reasons we did it. In London we didn't have those wonderful lofts like you do in New York, so being in the country meant we could play as loud and often as we liked. We also felt at the time that it was important for all of us to live together in the same spot.

MUSICIAN: How did that work out?

WINWOOD: It was a disaster! Think about it, man. I mean, what do you do when a *girl* comes along, or something? You know what I mean? They'd say "Well, I can't live here with four blokes!" It wasn't only that, of course, you had to go three miles through mud and mire just to buy some tea or cigarettes, cause we were really out in the middle of nowhere. And then there were all the usual problems and conflicts that come up when friends live together.

MUSICIAN: Sounds idyllic. How and where did you meet the other members of the band?

WINWOOD: I met them at clubs during breaks. While I was doing all this hard work with Spencer Davis, it was realized by the "Powers That Be" that it actually would be better if we were given one or two days off every year or so. So I'd go to the clubs in Birmingham and hang out and mingle, and that's where I met Chris Wood, then Dave and Jim. They were all playing in various bands.

MUSICIAN: Wasn't Dave Mason originally a roadie for Traffic?

WINWOOD: No, no. no. He was a roadie for Spencer Davis, not Traffic. At that point we knew we were going to form Traffic, and Dave needed some money so I got him a job as a roadie with us, and we'd go off and practice when we had some time.

MUSICIAN: What was the band's chemistry like during those first few albums? It seemed like Dave Mason left the band and rejoined every other day.

WINWOOD: It was a bit like that. The idea of Traffic when we were working in the cottage was that we'd collaborate on all the material—everybody would contribute—because we felt that was a much better way of operating than on person going away and composing alone. It worked fine for awhile until we had a breakdown, which was because Dave decided he just couldn't work that way. He had to go off and write his songs alone and then present them to us as accompanists. This happened fairly early on, I think it was on the first album or halfway through the second. Things like "Mr. Fantasy" and "Paper Sun" were true collaborations, but as soon as we started getting reactions like "Look, whose song is this, mine or yours?," then it became a

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political problem within the group, and Dave left.

MUSICIAN: What caused him to change his mind and return?

WINWOOD: We went to the States and played as a three piece and Dave saw us and thought "Hey, I'm missing out" and said "Look, I want to come back . . ." I think he realized that playing on stage really is a collaborative thing, more than writing.

MUSICIAN: *John Barleycorn* seemed to be a real turning point for you. The tone was very positive and up, you seemed to be going through a mood change.

WINWOOD: Yeah, I was feeling relief, actually. Between the second album and *John Barleycorn* I quit the group and did this thing with Blind Faith which turned into a bit of a nightmare, so I was relieved to be out of that situation.

MUSICIAN: What went wrong with Blind Faith? Were people expecting . . .

WINWOOD: *That* was the problem right there: expectations! It did seem like the ultimate supergroup, and when people begin to think like that about a group before they've even heard them play together . . . I mean, what can you possibly do in a situation like that?

MUSICIAN: People expected you to be Super-Cream. We'd just caught on to the idea of long jams, and when you guys came out with that record with those short, concise songs (relatively speaking), many people just couldn't shift gears for it.

WINWOOD: Yes, that's it. There was just too much of a gap between what was expected and what we were doing.

MUSICIAN: What was the main problem, and how did it manifest?

WINWOOD: Well, the main problem was that we would do a bad gig, and there would be twenty-five to thirty thousand people all going mad saying it was just *fantastic* . . .you just can't hold up under that kind of pressure. You either go mad or you say that's it. Or you turn to drugs or drink. You begin to feel like you're losing touch with reality, cause people's responses have nothing to do with the actual situation. The true communication between musician and audience breaks down, and that communication is vital—it's what music is all about—it's what makes the musician do what he does and strive to do it better. There was no way we could kid ourselves that it was a good situation.

MUSICIAN: So you were almost eaten alive by your audience . . . ?

WINWOOD: Yeah. That chemistry was very good, and if the situation hadn't overpowered us I think it would have been a great group. But there was no way we could turn around and say *"Hey, this is great. We'll go out there and play a load of shit, and they'll just love it and we'll rake in the dough forever!"*

MUSICIAN: What was it like working with Eric Clapton? Is he quiet, assertive . . .

WINWOOD: Both. He's quiet *and* assertive. Great to work with really, we both wound up laying guitar on the album, trading leads: I've heard interviews on the radio with Eric where he seems to be trying to convince himself that he's very mediocre and everyone in his band plays better than he does. That's a bit ridiculous, an overreaction. He wasn't *quite* like that . . .

MUSICIAN: What about yourself? People have wondered why you pulled out of the London scene to go live on a farm, when you could have stayed in the big city and drank whiskey, played cards, drove around in big cars, gone out with fancy women, stayed up all night. All that neat stuff. Seriously, was there a part of you that just rejected the whole star syndrome, that wanted to have a safe place to retreat to?

WINWOOD: Well, as I was saying before, success didn't just drop out of the sky for me like it does with a lot of other people. It was a very slow, gradual process, and I think I was lucky enough to be able to cope with it. I'm sure people who are close to me might disagree or whatever, but I think that it didn't change me—definitely not like I've seen it change other people for the worse. To me it was important to maintain the purity of the thing

itself, to make music out of a need to express something, not because of the pressures of a contract or anything. I also really wanted to devote some time to perfecting my technique, because people think—more in this country than the U.S.—that rock and roll is a juvenile thing. The energies may be essentially youthful, but the techniques involved are really quite tricky and hard, and most of the young kids don't master them before they're out there. I thought it important to develop the technique whilst still trying to maintain the energy, and that's what made me move out to the farm. If you go back to Traffic it's clear that we wanted to express ourselves musically; we weren't much interested in theatre, or visuals. On the other hand, I was never really a great piano player . . .

MUSICIAN: Maybe not technically, but that's what I loved about your playing. It was rough and earthy, lotsa' soul, I could listen to your organ playing on the live side of the *Last Exit* album all day. You have a certain touch . . .

WINWOOD: But that's not piano. Do you see what I'm saying? Organ is a very different instrument that requires quite a different technique. Much closer to synthesizer, actually. Elton John, for instance, is a great piano player, but whenever he goes to synth it doesn't work, cause they're like apples and oranges. I've played keyboards for years, but I'd really have to work quite a bit harder to master them. So when synthesizers came in, especially polysynths, it opened a whole new door for me. I just regret that it hadn't happened twelve or fifteen years earlier.

MUSICIAN: I don't know about that. To be quite honest, I've really missed your piano playing on the last few albums. Things like "Glad" or *Barleycorn* weren't technically all that spectacular, but that spare, soulful style with your voice arching over the top of it had a lot of power. There were a lot of spaces, and the whole thing about synthesizers is that it's a smooth, continual sound, just the opposite.

WINWOOD: I don't quite agree with the idea that synths always fill up the holes, though I do agree that the Go album was like that. But 98% of the synth on that album wasn't played by me, it was played by Stomu Yamashta and Klaus Schultze, So, not guilty! But yeah, it's arguable that you could say the same thing about the new solo album—and O.K., I'll agree with you there, but I think that's because of my limited use of the synthesizer, it would be wrong to blame the instrument itself. I think what you would quite rightly point out is my lack of mastery of the instrument.

MUSICIAN: But isn't it true that in actual fact the synth forces you to play a different kind of music in some ways?

WINWOOD: It might, but it shouldn't. You ought to be able to make music with spaces in it on a synth. It's the polysynth on this album which in many ways makes up for the lack of musicianship on the basic tracks—that gives it that texture. I've used the mono synth more to imitate horns and that kind of thing.

MUSICIAN: Let's talk about the new solo album. You play all the instruments on it, don't you?

WINWOOD: Right . Including the background vocals.

MUSICIAN: Had it been a goal or ambition of yours to do something like this?

WINWOOD: Well, before I answer that let me say that I'm aware that doing this kind of thing can be a real cop-out.

MUSICIAN: How so?

WINWOOD: Because you can play the finished product for people and they'll say "Hmm, yeah, that O.K.", and then you say "I did it all myself" and they say "WHAT?" "Fan*tas*tic!" So I want to say that the idea was not to impress people. I'd started to put the ideas down on tape with the possibility of using people, and then I just thought in my stubborn bloody-minded sort of way "Well, I'm going to do the whole thing like this. I'd sunk nearly all my money in the new home studio and so I had the opportunity to work on my own and at my own pace. I thought doing it this way would be quick, inexpensive, and easy, and it turned out to be slow, expensive, and difficult. That lesson came home to me quite soon!

MUSICIAN: How did you actually go about doing it? What tracks would you lay down first? Was there a particular instrument you'd always start with?

WINWOOD: I don't believe in using formulas to write or make records, because as soon as I arrive at one it's always so exciting to break it. It's like a compulsion to break the formula, to satisfy myself, my own curiosity, in case I'm missing something. On this album the approach varied with each track. Sometimes I'd begin with keyboards, on a couple of them I started with drums . . .

MUSICIAN: That must be incredibly difficult . . .

WINWOOD: It's not hard to hear what the thing might sound like in your head while you're laying down the drum part. It's difficult, sure, but not impossible. The really difficult aspect of it was all the caps you had to wear. You had to listen to everything over and over again from different perspectives, with different ears, as it were: one for the writer, then put on the producer's cap, then the bass player's cap . . . I thought I was in danger of wearing out the tape from playing it back so much!

MUSICIAN: Isn't it hard to work up that passion and kineticism when you're doing it all by yourself. when you don't have other band members to interact with?

WINWOOD: I can see what you mean, but that wasn't really my problem. I'm used to doing sessions with other people where I have to overdub on tape, with nobody else there. So you have to bounce off the tape. Then again there are producers who believe that no good records have ever been made with overdubbing, but I'm not one of those. I don't agree that everything must be done then and there or else.

MUSICIAN: You're not a subscriber to the Nick Lowe theory that if you don't get it in the first two or three tries you should throw it away?

WINWOOD: Well, not throw it away, but I believe in that aspect of performance. For instance, I built up a rota when I was doing vocals where I'd try a take two or three times and if I didn't get it I'd leave it and go on to another track and then come back for another try a few days later. But what I was trying to say before was that some producers insist that everything must be done LIVE—it doesn't matter how many takes, as long as it's live—no drop ins, no timing-up, because, they say, all the good records they know weren't made that way. They neglect to mention the fact that all the records they feel are good are pre-1960. I don't agree with that because I don't think one can ignore technological advances. Or if you do you've got to be bloody good. The most fantastic thing to me now is that Sequential Circuits have now brought out the Prophet 5 Synthesizer with equal temperment, which I can't wait to sink my teeth into.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of sessions, your work with Marianne Faithful on *Broken English* was very well received in the States. What kind of a role did you play on that album, besides the overdubbing? Did you have anything to do with the arrangements?

WINWOOD: I did work on the arrangements a bit, but I didn't write any material for that album. Although we're now working together on her new record, and I have written a song for that one. I worked quite a bit with the producer on that first album, I remember we spent a lot of time working out that synth section on "Ballad Of Lucy Jordan," trying to find something that would work well.

MUSICIAN: What about that repetitive bass riff in "Broken English?" Did you make up that figure?

WINWOOD: Yeah, I made that up on the synth. I was told—I was going to say in no uncertain terms, but that's not right; it was more like I was told in *un*certain terms—what to do. I was told what was required, and came up with that. Although it sounds like the whole track was based on that, it was actually overdubbed.

MUSICIAN: I never would have imagined . . .

WINWOOD: Yeah, it sounds like a sequencer was used and everything laid on top of that, but not so. I played the whole thing, because obviously you can't overdub a sequencer.

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MUSICIAN: How precise were the instructions from the producer.

WINWOOD: Well, he usually said things like "I want it to sound like lemmings going over a cliff . . ."

MUSICIAN: I see. Speaking of going over a cliff, we never finished the Traffic story. After *John Barleycorn* came *Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys*, which seemed to mark another transition point.

WINWOOD: Right. We were going through a lot of changes, adding extra people, and Jim Capaldi was getting more into songwriting and wanted to leave off drums, so we got in a new drummer and extra musicians.

MUSICIAN: Did that drastically alter the band's chemistry?

WINWOOD: In one way it was a great help to Traffic, and in another it detracted slightly from what the band essentially was. A lot of Americans I talked to thought it hurt us, but that band with the Muscle Shoals guys was fantastic. They didn't force anything on the band, and they were such great musicians. The band did start to get very complex at that point, however, because there were all kinds of personalities to deal with. Lots of growing pains.

MUSICIAN: Could you ever imagine working with the original lineup again?

WINWOOD: Well, to be honest, when I see other groups do this it puts me off badly. Obviously, when a group reforms they're forced to turn out the old shit, and they're just fatter, and a bit balder, and a bit longer in the tooth—I think it's just the worst thing. I'm not saying for Traffic to get together again would necessarily be like that, but that aspect of it I find obnoxious.

MUSICIAN: Would you like to work with a band again?

WINWOOD: Yes, definitely. In fact, I'm putting together a band now that I hope to record and tour with. You've got to have that live thing to keep open your communication with the audience. It's like what I was saying about Blind Faith before. When I got back to Traffic after that and we went out on the road it was such an incredible relief, because when we played a lousy gig people KNEW it was lousy, and would respond accordingly.

MUSICIAN: So there was real contact again. They were responding to what they were hearing and not to some superstar image in their heads.

WINWOOD: Exactly. We'd think "Hey, we were really *awful* tonight, and they knew it. How wonderful!"

MUSICIAN: If you met yourself again at sixteen, what advice would you give yourself, or anyone else starting off in the music world?

WINWOOD: Not to be misled by fads and fashion. There's this thing, especially in England, this insatiable need to be hip to the flavor of the month, which I think has to be avoided. There's been so much of it over the past twenty years. Music has got to find an equilibrium. I personally think people are told what to like, and that obscures the essential quality of the music. People often kid themselves, but I believe that deep down inside everyone knows what's good and what isn't. The other thing I'd advise is that people take advantage of the new technology and get used to recording as much as possible, even if it's just at home, because basically the tape doesn't lie.

MUSICIAN: One last question: how does it feel to be doing interviews again?

WINWOOD: Oh, this was fine. No problem. Last week some guy in London kept me for over four hours . . . He said he wanted to go over every detail in my life, "What were you doing when you were eight years old"—pretty thorough. I told Van Morrison about all this and he told me his secret for dealing with it.

MUSICIAN: What was that?

WINWOOD: He doesn't do interviews.

SCOTT WAINER

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

Guitarist, studio craftsman, singer and tunesmith, Lindsey Buckingham has emerged from the shadows of megapop's Big Mac as a creative force and stage presence. Herein he discusses the group's change in direction, its musical relationships, and his view of the recording process.

By Dan Forte

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Summer, 1976

More than 60,000 file into the Oakland Coliseum's outdoor stadium for a "Day On The Green" featuring Peter Frampton, Gary Wright, and Fleetwood Mac. Bill Graham is billing the concert as the British Invasion, although two-fifths of one of the acts grew up in California. Guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, 27, was in fact born in Palo Alto, about thirty miles from the Coliseum, where he is now playing as part of Fleetwood Mac. In a white peasant shirt, beard and curly hair, Buckingham looks decidedly California.

Since the vast majority of the sun worshippers have come to hear Frampton sing "Show Me The Way," Fleetwood plays a rather abbreviated set, only partially culled from their latest, self-titled album. Midway through the program, Buckingham, who has remained in the background for most of the set, comes to the microphone. "We'd like to do a Peter Green song for you now," he says, almost self-consciously, before breaking into the band's 1970 hit, "Oh Well," written and originally sung by the group's founder.

February, 1977

Fleetwood Mac kicks off their 1977 tour with a benefit for the Jacques Cousteau Society at the Berkeley Community Theater. Except for a short film about penguins (long a symbol of Fleetwood Mac), the band is the only act on the bill. Material from their just-released *Rumours* LP is met with as much applause of recognition as songs from their previous album, which garnered three hit singles.

Midway through the show it becomes apparent that vocalist Stevie Nicks, battling a strained throat, is not going to be able to make it through the set. The spotlight turns to the band's other two songwriters, Christine McVie and, more noticeably, Lindsey Buckingham, who displays a degree of confidence and guitar technique barely hinted at on album. The concert climaxes near the end with Buckingham's dramatic "I'm So Afraid," taken a bit slower than the recorded version.

December, 1979

Dressed in a black shirt and a plain gray suit, his hair cropped short, Lindsey Buckingham is pacing the stage of San Francisco's Cow Palace. The guitarist clearly stands out from the rest of the band, both musically and visually. Whether he is singing one of his own songs from the new *Tusk* album or backing Nicks or McVie on one of their tunes, Buckingham plays and looks like a man possesed — his fixed stare never leaving the audience, a sinister grin never leaving his face.

With three rim shots from Fleetwood's snare drum and a piano glissando from Christine McVie, Buckingham shouts, "What makes you think you're the one," pointing at his ex-girlfriend Stevie Nicks. As has come to be expected, the set's highpoint is "I'm So Afraid," a tour de force study in dynamics with Lindsey Buckingham's echoing guitar building in speed, volume and intensity.

In its fifteen years as a band, Fleetwood Mac has undergone more changes than any group from the Sixties that is still intact. Starting out as an English homage to Chicago blues, they have survived underground cult status to become one of the most popular groups in pop music today. They have endured what seems like one personnel change per album, especially in the guitar department, which has seen Peter

Green, Jeremy Spencer, Danny Kirwan, and Bob Welch come and go. Bassist John McVie and drummer Mick Fleetwood are the band's only remaining original members.

In the past six years Fleetwood Mac's personnel has remained constant, if not necessarily stable, with Fleetwood, McVie, vocalist Stevie Nicks, McVie's ex-wife Christine on piano, and guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, who has individually gone through nearly as many changes as the band has collectively.

Buckingham was born in 1949 and took up guitar at seven, strumming along to his older brother's collection of Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Everly Brothers records. He later turned to folk music (the Kingston Trio, Ian and Sylvia, John Herald), studying banjo and fingerpicking styles. In the late Sixties he played electric bass in a Bay Area rock band called Fritz, which featured vocalist Stephanie Nicks. When Fritz broke up, Lindsey and Stevie stayed together, both musically and romantically, and recorded one album for Polydor, *Buckingham Nicks*, produced and engineered by Keith Olsen (with an assist from Richard Dashut).

In December of 1974, Mick Fleetwood was looking for a studio at which to record Fleetwood Mac's next album and came to Sound City in Los Angeles where Keith Olsen played him a track from *Buckingham Nicks*, "Frozen Love." Two weeks later guitarist Bob Welch announced that he was leaving Fleetwood. On New Year's Eve the drummer telephoned Olsen to ask about the pair he'd heard on the record Olsen had played him. As it turned out Buckingham and Nicks were there at a party at Olsen's house. Without so much as an audition, Fleetwood offered them both a job in the band.

Fleetwood Mac was recorded early in 1975 and gave the band an element that had previously been missing—catchy, well-crafted hit singles. "Over My Head," "Rhiannon," "Say You Love Me"—virtually every cut on the LP probably *could* have become a hit single, but the band had the good sense and taste to stop after three or four and record a follow-up album.

Rumours was recorded in 1976 amid tensions that saw the McVies divorce and Lindsey and Stevie split. When the album was released in 1977, Fleetwood Mac found themselves almost simultaneously on the covers of *Rolling Stone* and *People Magazine*. *Rumours* spun off as many hits as the previous album—"Go Your Own Way," "Dreams," "Don't Stop"—and became one of the biggest selling albums in pop music history.

Tusk, the group's quirky follow-up, sacrificed cohesion at the expense of a few million in record sales. Less a group effort than the previous LPs, it has repeatedly been compared to the Beatles' *White Album*—Nicks doing her songs with instrumental backing from the other members, McVie doing her numbers, very little harmonizing, Buckingham recording several tracks by himself at a makeshift home studio. But, while it may not hold together well as a unified album, the individual performances on *Tusk* are nevertheless outstanding, especially Buckingham's which display a startlingly new approach to recording, structure, mix and instrumentation.

Then, after a solid year of touring, the band released its first live LP, *Fleetwood Mac Live*, before taking five months off from touring and recording.

The reasons for Fleetwood Mac's ascent to the top are hard to pinpoint. Chemistry is often a word that's batted around. Having three singer/songwriters the calibre of Buckingham, Nicks and McVie certainly doesn't hurt. But there is obviously a whole-is-greater-than-the-sum-of-the-parts element at work when the band is really on.

As a songwriter, Buckingham has come up with most of the group's harder edged material—"Go Your Own Way," "Monday Morning," "Second Hand News," and "World Turning," let alone some of his stuff on *Tusk*. But he is also capable of writing some of the band's most sensitive songs—such as "Never Going Back Again" and "Save Me A Place."

On guitar, Lindsey is as unorthodox as he is underrated. Still basically employing the techniques he learned on banjo and fingerstyle folk guitar, he sort of frails and flails his way through solos, often ending the night by bandaging bloodied fingertips. Buckingham will probably never place at the top of *Guitar Player* Magazine's reader poll as Best Rock Guitarist, but a more tasteful lead guitarst would be hard to find. In the words of John Stewart, "He knows the magic of one note."

Because of his innovative work on *Tusk*, Buckingham has become a much sought after producer, although he turns down far more offers than he takes on. He produced Walter Egan's *Not Shy* album and *Bombs Away Dream Babies* for one of his early influences, John Stewart, who regards Buckingham as "the only genius I've ever worked with in the studio." The former one-third of the Kingston Trio recounts, "Lindsey came down when we were doing the mix, and he was turning all the pots, layering the guitars. I was watching him and I said, 'Lindsey, sometime you've got to tell me what you're doing.' He said, 'I'm turning the knobs till it sounds right.' A few people I know of really know how to make that mystical 'thing' happen with a record. Brian Wilson is one; Lindsey Buckingham is the master at it." (Ironically, Stewart, an acoustic folkie for twenty years, began playing electric lead guitar by listening to Lindsey's work before discovering that Buckingham had in fact learned to play acoustic guitar listening to Stewart's records with the Kingston Trio. "I got the *Fleetwood Mac* album," Stewart recalls, "and something about it sure sounded familiar." The one-note solo on *Bombs Away*'s top ten single "Gold," while it is one of the best examples of the "Lindsey Buckingham guitar style," was actually played by Stewart.

Onstage, perhaps even more so than in the studio, Lindsey Buckingham has become the clear leader of Fleetwood Mac. In six years he has evolved from guitarist to creative force to kinetic focal point. While the other four members of the band have been splashed across every phase of the media, Buckingham has remained somewhat mysterious, in the shadows. As he points out in the following interview, he seldom gets fan mail and can walk down the street completely unnoticed. "Whatever appreciation is being offered towards me now," he states, "is the kind of appreciation that I would like to get. It's more from a musicianship standpoint, hopefully—it's more fundamental . . . it's been honest—that's for sure."

MUSICIAN: How exactly did you and Stevie come to join Fleetwood Mac?

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

BUCKINGHAM: They were getting ready to do an album, so Mick was looking for a studio. And Bob Welch had not yet left the group, but Mick sort of had a feeling he was going to. So Mick went out to look at Sound City, and Keith Olsen, who's the top honcho there, put on "Frozen Love" from the *Buckingham Nicks* album—not to hype us by any means, but he was proud of it as a track and proud of the sound and the production. He just wanted to show Mick what the speakers sounded like. I guess Mick was silently remarking at the guitar playing on it and just the overall sound. About two weeks later Bob Welch decided to leave. Mick has always been such an instinctive person, anyway—he just asked us to join.

MUSICIAN: No audition?

BUCKINGHAM: No. They didn't audition Bob Welch either—they just liked him. The only audition was Mick hearing "Frozen Love." He got the idea that at least I could play guitar and Stevie and I could sing. He just thought the sound would fit in. And he was right. A real fluke.

MUSICIAN: Going from total obscurity to the top of the charts is what most struggling musicians hope and pray for every day of their lives. But have there been any drawbacks to that level of *People Magazine* stardom?

BUCKINGHAM: Well, you see, I don't feel like I've been in the limelight as far as the attention focused on the group. Stevie, in the beginning, her visual presence and her personality were so strong. That was always the figurehead of the group, and still is, in a way. In a way, I really haven't had to deal with a barrage of external adulation by any means. I very seldom get a fan letter.

MUSICIAN: Can you walk down the street and not be recognized?

BUCKINGHAM: Exactly. Oh yes. I can walk anywhere and no one cares. Also, I'm always changing my hair, so that helps.

MUSICIAN: Most people, when they think of Fleetwood Mac probably still have an image of Stevie Nicks in a top hat and cape. But onstage your position seems to have evolved from being more or less a member of the rhythm section to being the focal point of the band, especially on the Tusk tour.

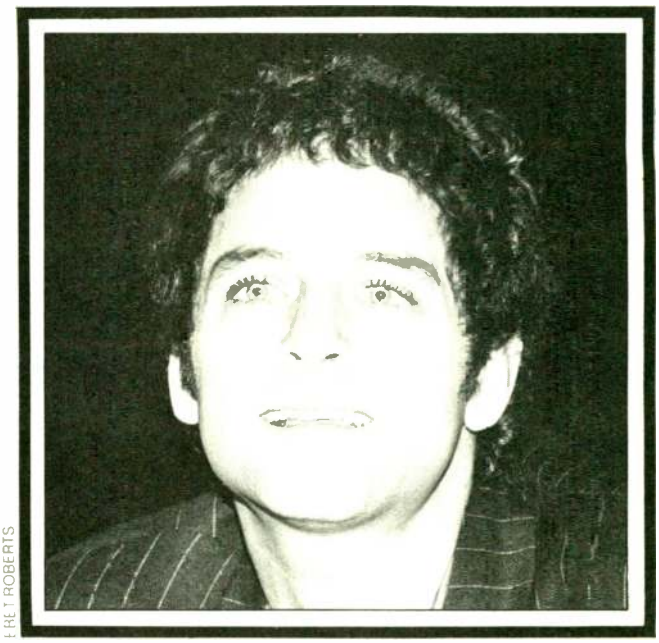
BUCKINGHAM: It's certainly working that way; I don't know if that's good or bad. It really can't be helped. But whatever appreciation is being offered towards me now is the kind of appreciation that I would like to get. It's more from a musicianship standpoint, hopefully—it's from people who appreciate serious things about music. It has nothing to do with costumes or even image—it's more fundamental. It's nice to open a *Rolling Stone* and see that you have the big picture for a change, but even so, the whole external aspect of the success hasn't really gotten through. I don't feel that it's changed me, because it hasn't barraged me very much at all. It's been slow. It's been honest—that's for sure.

MUSICIAN: Has your growth within the group corresponded with your personal growth. Did you feel like you had to try and fit it when you first joined, and now you can do what you want do do?

BUCKINGHAM: Yeah. It's been very much a series of situations, of having to adapt. The kind of role that, say, Stevie and I had towards each other and that I had in *Buckingham Nicks* as compared to what happened six months after we joined Fleetwood Mac—I really had to turn around. It was a very good thing to happen. I gained so much more appreciation for Stevie that way. I had to reevaluate the whole thing. There's been a lot of adapting to do. When I first joined the group, I had to go and play Bob Welch's songs and all this strange stuff that had nothing to do with me or me growing as an individual. But that was all part of it; I needed to do that one way or another. Once Stevie and I had broken up and had sort of gotten through that, it was just a question of seeing what I really had to offer and trying to establish that, and saying, "Hey, I do have more to offer than just being part of the rhythm section." Also, people don't see what you contribute in the studio, and you can't expect them to.

MUSICIAN: Was the change from *Rumours* to *Tusk* a conscious attempt to not get pegged as a two-minute-thirty-second pop song group?

BUCKINGHAM: In a way, yes. Speaking for myself, my songs are probably more of a departure than Stevie's or Christine's, but even theirs, the arrangements are slightly different. There's been little effort made to fit them into a single mold, whereas on *Rumours* every song was more or less crafted as that kind of song. It's not that the songs on *Tusk* are long; in fact, someone asked me when the album first came out why all my songs were so short. I just said, "Well, rock & roll songs were traditionally short songs." But, for me, it was a question of experimenting with a new format in recording.



LYNETTE ROBERTS

Some of those tunes were recorded in my house on my 24-track. The overall atmosphere of the album just evolved by itself. We wanted to do a double album—I don't think we knew exactly where it was going. But I was interested in pursuing some things that were a little bit rawer. You just hear so much stuff on the radio that has the particular drum sound. I mean, everything is worked around the drums these days. It's also studio-ized; I thought it was important to delve into some things that were off to the side a little bit more, so that we're not so clichéd. And we certainly did that—at the expense of selling a few records.

Between the *Fleetwood Mac* album and *Rumours* we changed the people we were working with totally, even though *Fleetwood Mac* had sold two and a half or three million copies. We could have stuck with a good sure thing, and we went through a lot of hell reestablishing a working relationship with other people to move forward and to try to grow, which we did on the *Rumours* LP. Now on *Tusk* we more or less did the same thing and took a lot of chances, but we did it because it was something we felt was right to do and was important, and it shook things up. It certainly shook people's preconceptions of us up a bit. We divided our audience a little bit. A lot of people who were sort of on one side and saw *Rumours* as kind of MOR were really pleased by *Tusk*; and a lot of people were very disappointed, because they were expecting more of the same thing. You can't let what you think is going to sell dictate over what you think is important.

MUSICIAN: What sort of music were you listening to that might have influenced the outcome of *Tusk*?

BUCKINGHAM: Not that much of anything, specifically. The fact that the New Wave stuff was emerging helped to solidify or to clarify feelings or give one a little more courage to go out and try something a little more daring. But as far as the actual way the songs turned out, it wasn't a question of listening to a certain group and trying to emulate them at all. No one in particular; the whole scene just seemed so healthy to me.

The stuff on the album isn't that weird to me, but I guess it is for someone who's expecting "You Make Loving Fun" or something. I was surprised, because I was at that time, and still am, ready to hear some things that I felt were fresh and I thought were approached slightly differently, in the spirit of the old rock & roll but contemporary as well. The LP sold about four million albums—nothing to cry about. It was interesting to see the reaction. Most of the critical response to the album was real good, and then some of it wasn't at all. But we definitely divided our audience.

MUSICIAN: When you write songs, do you make a complete

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

demo tape of it and play it for the band?

BUCKINGHAM: Yes. Now I make masters, though. I've got a 24-track. There are two to three songs on *Tusk* that were done that way, just at my house, and they went onto the album.

MUSICIAN: With you playing all of the instruments?

BUCKINGHAM: Yeah. "The Ledge," "Save Me A Place," and "That's Enough for Me."

MUSICIAN: Do you still think of those as "Fleetwood Mac songs"?

BUCKINGHAM: Well, I'm not sure *they* see them as Fleetwood Mac songs [laughs]. I don't see why they can't be. I think of them as Fleetwood Mac songs—we've done some of them live. We ran down "The Ledge" a whole bunch of times and almost started doing that in the set; we were doing "That's Enough For Me" live. But we had a lot of problems trying to integrate the stuff from *Tusk* with the old set.

MUSICIAN: Do your songs come out differently if you work alone as opposed to working them out with the band members?

BUCKINGHAM: I think we're starting to do that more. One of the things that was exciting about doing *Tusk* is that we can take some of that and reapply it to a collective thing a little more than we did on *Tusk*. Certainly in terms of a group there's a want to do that, especially after experimenting with something that was less of a cooperative venture. I think the next Fleetwood Mac studio album will be more group-oriented—it certainly won't be less. It's not like it's moving in one direction or the other; it's just expanding and contracting.

MUSICIAN: Do you think you'll ever record a solo album?

BUCKINGHAM: Sure, why not? I don't think there's any stigma to it, other than misunderstanding from the external world. If it makes you feel good, I don't see why not. But I'm not in any great hurry to do my solo album.

MUSICIAN: Would you see a solo project as an outlet to experiment more or just a chance to put more of your own songs on LP?

BUCKINGHAM: Some of both, I would say. It wouldn't be radically different—it couldn't get much more different than *Tusk*. See, one of the things about being in Fleetwood Mac is that Christine writes mainly soft, pretty songs, and Stevie more or less does the same thing, too. They both write rock & roll songs from time to time, and do it very well, but the burden of the real gutsiness usually is on me. So if Christine has X amount of songs, and Stevie has X amount of songs, my slot almost out of necessity is filled by pretty tough stuff. I think it would be a lot of fun to just experience making a statement in a broader range of things. If you took all of my songs from *Tusk*, they would probably make a more cohesive album than the whole *Tusk* album, just in terms of cohesion. I wouldn't want to get too much more fringey than something like "The Ledge," you know. The funny thing is, so many people reacted to that song like, "My God, what is that?" It didn't even seem that radical to me. See, I'm trying to learn more about writing.

MUSICIAN: Has the creative process of how a song takes shape changed much from *Buckingham Nicks* to *Tusk*?

BUCKINGHAM: I'd say it's come back around full circle, in a way, except with a whole lot more knowledge, I would hope. I've learned so much from John and Mick.

MUSICIAN: In terms of what, since they don't write songs?

BUCKINGHAM: In terms of musical sense. Mick's musical sense is hard to pin down, because it's just such an instinctive thing. But in terms of just writing songs, that hasn't changed, no. For instance, Stevie will write her words, and everything will be central to that. That's good; sometimes I wish I could do that. Mine are usually central to a groove of some sort, and everything else will follow. That hasn't changed over all this time. A lot of rock & rollers do that.

MUSICIAN: Does that method make your songs more traditionally structured than Stevie's?

BUCKINGHAM: They can be, yeah. Which isn't necessarily good. There's a fine line. You take someone like Springsteen, who has the best of both, I think, in terms of being a writer and someone who knows what he's doing. His phrasing can go from a certain timing in one line, and in the next line it'll be totally different, because the words are different. Whereas if I was thinking of those two lines in a song, I might just think of repeating the same thing over and over, because I would still be sort of nebulous in my mind. I wouldn't have the words completely formed. So there's an advantage by far in being able to do that, because it gives the whole feeling of the song a certain spontaneity. He's feeling the words in a certain way, and he's putting them down, and everything else will follow that. Stevie does the same thing with her words; she surprises you with phrasings.

But there's an advantage to the other way, too. If you can eventually get around that, and make it so that your vocal doesn't sound stiff, you're so much more aware of how to make one track sound totally different from the other, in terms of applying a certain instrument to it or something. But in terms of structure—like A-B-A-B-C or whatever—my songs are probably a lot more that way than Stevie's, because she doesn't really know A-B-A-B-C. She writes like Mick drums.

MUSICIAN: Are your recording and producing techniques pretty much intuitive?

BUCKINGHAM: More or less. This is the first time I've had a real setup. Doing *Tusk* I had a 24-track little MCI board that I was working on. Now I've got a Studer 24-track which the band bought quite some time ago. It's a full-size console and gives me something to work with—some limiters, some EQ, some big speakers, some real equipment. For the first time I'll be able to realize or not realize some of the things that I've felt I could do.

It's very frustrating sometimes in the studio, because you've got so many people in there, and technically I'm not there to twist knobs or anything. A lot of times you feel you could do a better job than somebody else, because you have the intuition and they really don't. They've had a few years technical experience, but they can't make the connection I can from feeling what the song's about—doing it the way an artist paints, where suddenly all the intuition takes over and he's just there doing it. That *can* be what it's like, and I think it offers a lot more opportunity for very unusual things to happen. Things present themselves, and if you have the intuition to pick them up when they present themselves and not let them go by, you can get some very unusual sounds. I feel real good about my capabilities as an engineer.

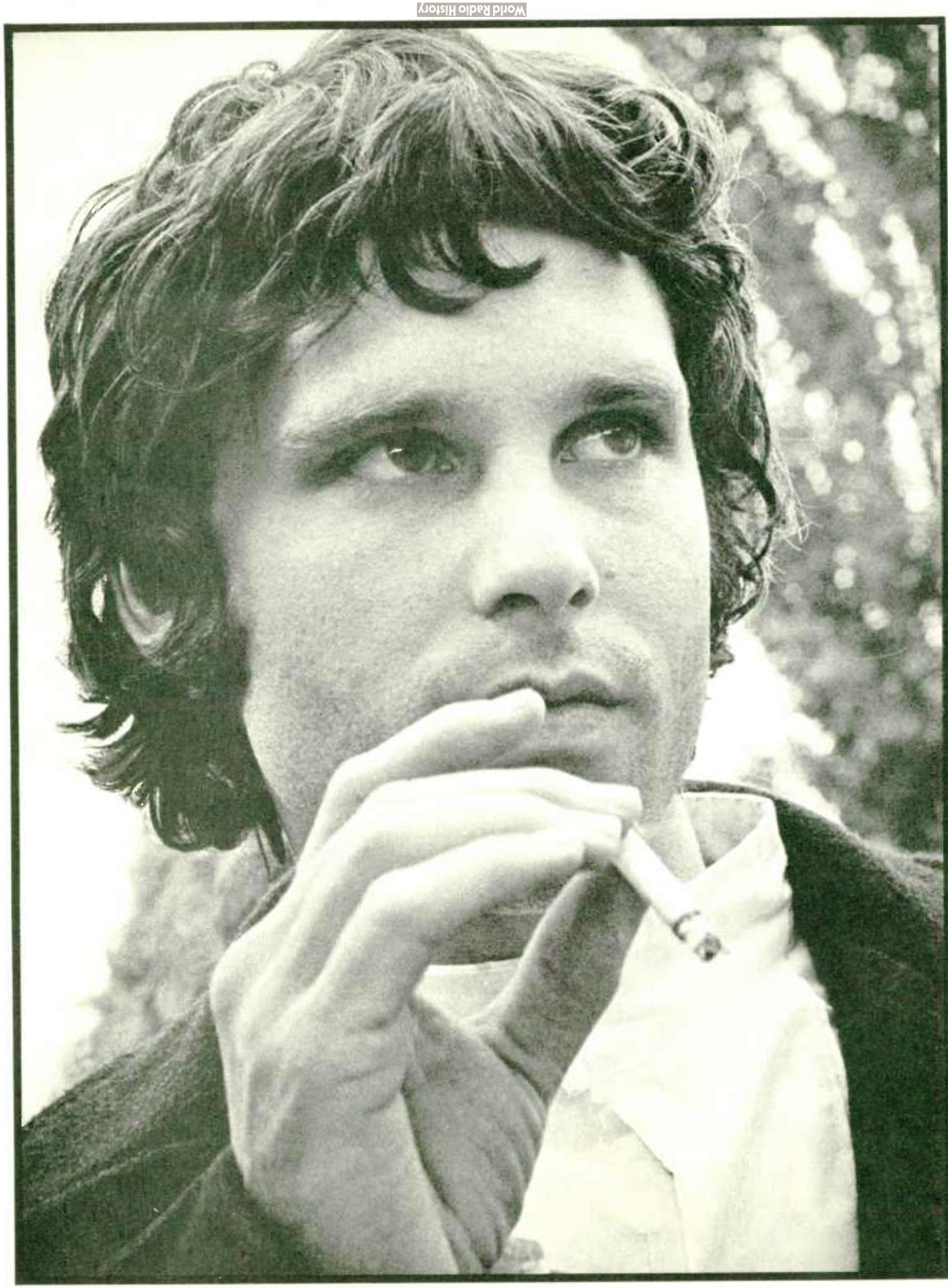
MUSICIAN: Do you think a trained engineer, in their pursuit to make something sound neat and clean, can destroy the emotion?

BUCKINGHAM: All the time. The idea is to capture the moment that you perceived something to be a certain way and pursue it right then. Try to pursue things that you can hear in your head to their ultimate disaster or whatever.

MUSICIAN: Do you plan on doing more outside production work with other artists?

BUCKINGHAM: A few people have wanted me to produce them lately, and it's nice to know that people want you to work with them, but I just don't think it's the right time for me to do that. With Walter Egan and John Stewart, it just seemed like the right thing to do at those particular times. I'm real good at editing out this section, or saying, "Let's do this in there." That's the thing I'm probably best at—being able to think abstractly and say, "This isn't making it here; let's do this; put this part in here, and it'll make all the difference in the world." But choosing to do that as a whole project is something that I don't do very often.

On *Bombs Away Dream Babies*, I wasn't in the studio with John as much as I would have liked to have been, because we were working on *Tusk* at the time. It kind of blew John's mind when I first met him, because I knew all his songs. I had almost all of the old Kingston Trio albums—although very few people will admit that these days. Steve Stills, I'm sure he had them all, too, but he wouldn't admit it [laughs].



JIM MORRISON

BOZO DIONYSUS A DECADE LATER

By Lester Bangs

Just as Morrison was at his best as a poet of dread, desire and psychic dislocation, so he was also at his best as a clown. He made everything about the times even more bizarre, dangerous and apocalyptic than it really was, then turned around in midstream and made everything a joke.

We seem to be in the midst of a full-scale Doors Revival. It had been picking up steam for a while, but when Jerry Hopkins' and Daniel Sugerman's biography of Jim Morrison, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, became a Number One best-seller last year, all the Doors' LP product began to move in a big way again. Now there is the inevitable talk of a movie of Morrison's life, with (shudder) perhaps equally inevitable hints that John Travolta might have the starring role. The first question that would occur to anyone might be that asked by the first person I told I was doing the article: "Yeah, just why *is* there this big Doors fanaticism all over again, anyway?" The answer to that is not so hard to find, though in the end it may be questionable just how much it really has to do with the Doors. I'm reminded of the younger brother of an old girlfriend—he recently graduated from high school, and still lives with

their parents in Detroit, and when she told me he was playing in a rock band and I asked who his favorite artists were, she said: "His three favorite groups are the Yardbirds, Cream and the Doors."

Think about that for a minute. That kid is now entering college. The Doors broke up ten years ago this July—well, okay, Morrison died then, and if you want to call the trio that went on after his death the Doors you can, but nobody else did—and Cream and the Yardbirds have been dead since '68-'69. Sure all three of them were great groups, but were they all that epochal that somebody who was in elementary school when they scored their greatest triumphs should look back to them like this, to be holding on to them after that many years? Yeah, the Beatles were one thing, but *Cream*?

Perhaps a more apposite question, though, might be can you imagine being a teenager in the 1980's and having absolutely no culture you could call your own? Because that's what it finally comes down to, that and the further point which might as well be admitted, that you can deny it all you want but almost none of the groups that have been offered to the public in the past few years begin to compare with the best from the Sixties. And this is not just Sixties nostalgia—it's a simple matter of listening to them side by side and noting the relative lack of passion, expansiveness and commitment in even the best of today's groups. There is a halfheartedness, a tentativeness, and perhaps worst of all a tendency to hide behind irony that is after all perfectly reflective of the time, but doesn't do much to endear these pretenders to the throne. Sure, given the economic climate alone as well as all the other factors it was a hell of a lot easier to go all-out, berserk, yet hold on to whatever principles you had in the Sixties—today's bands are so eager to get bought up and groomed and sold by the pound it often seems as if even the most popular and colorful barely even exist, let alone stand for anything.

So what did the Doors stand for? Well, if I remember correctly, back in 1968 when I was living in a hippie crash pad in San Diego, California, all my roomates used to have earnest bull sessions far into the night about the "Death Trip" the Doors were supposedly on. Recall this one guy used to sit there all day and night toking on his doob and intoning things like "*Genius . . . is very close to . . . madness . . .*" instead of doing his homework, and he had a high appreciation of the Doors' early work. Me, I always kind of wanted Morrison to be better than he actually was, like I wished all his songs could have had the understated power of, say, "People Are Strange" *Faces look ugly when you're alone/Women seem wicked when you're unwanted . . .*), and, like many, it was only after being disappointed that I could learn to take the true poetry and terror whenever it could be found and develop an ever-increasing appreciation for most of the rest of Morrison's work as prime bozo action.

As for the Poet himself, Hopkins' and Sugerman's book is primarily interesting for what it apparently inadvertently reveals. In the foreword, on the very first page of the book, Sugerman lets go two sentences which have stopped more than one person of my acquaintance from reading any farther: "I just wanted to say I think Jim Morrison was a modern-day god. Oh hell, at least a lord."

It is never revealed whether Hopkins shares this assessment,

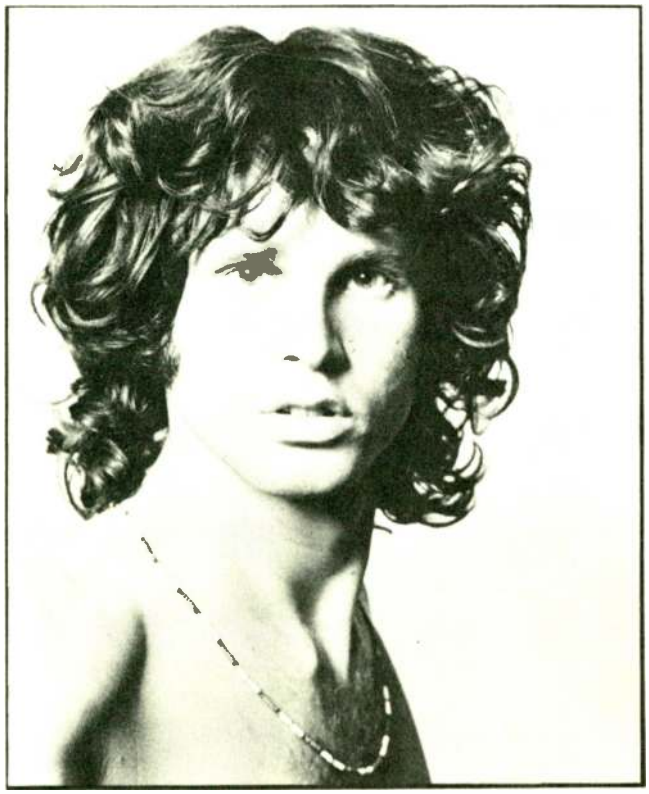
COURTESY OF ELEKTRA/ASYLUM

but the authors then go on for almost four hundred pages, amassing mountains of evidence almost all of which can for most readers point to only one conclusion: that Jim Morrison was apparently a nigh compleat asshole from the instant he popped out of the womb until he died in that bathtub in Paris (*if* he did indeed die there, they rather gamely leave us with). The first scene in the book takes place in 1955, when Jim was twelve years old, and finds him tobogganing with his younger brother and sister in the snowcapped mountains outside Albuquerque, New Mexico. According to Hopkins and Sugerman, Jim packed his two moppet siblings afront him in the toboggan so they couldn't move, got up a frightening head of downhill steam and aimed the three of them straight for the broadside of a log cabin:

> The toboggan was less than twenty yards from the side of the cabin on a certain, horrifying collision course. Anne stared dead ahead, the features on her face numbed by terror. Andy was whimpering.
>
> The toboggan swept under a hitching rail and five feet from the cabin was stopped by the children's father. As the children tumbled out of the sled, Anne babbled hysterically about how Jim had pushed them forward and wouldn't let them escape. Andy continued to cry. Steve and Clara Morrison tried to reassure the younger children.
>
> Jim stood nearby looking pleased. "We were just havin' a good time," he said.*

Surely an auspicious episode with which to begin recounting the life of a god. But it is only the beginning. Later we will see Jim's little brother breathing heavily at night due to chronic tonsillitis, and the future Lizard King sealing his mouth with cellophane tape and laughing at his near-suffocation. Or ridiculing a paraplegic. Or, at the age of seventeen, rubbing dogshit in his little brother's face.

What the book makes clear is that this sort of thing was no different in kind from later Doors-era antics like covering an entire recording studio (when they first went in to cut "The End") in chemical fire extinguisher foam, or dragging a cab full of people up to Elektra Records president Jac Holzman's apartment in the middle of the night, where Jim ripped out massive amounts of carpet and vomited all over the lobby. Yet this was the sort of thing that not only the authors but his friends and fans from the Sixties seemed to admire, even encourage. On one level it's just another case of a culture hero who you may not by now be so surprised to learn you would never have wanted to be around. On another, though, it's just more Sixties berserkitude of the kind that piddles down to pathetic slights like Iggy Pop walking through a song called "Dog Food" on the *Tomorrow* show in 1981 and then telling Tom Snyder that he represents the "Dionysian" as opposed to "Appollonian" type o' performer. But there was a time that was true for both Iggy and Jim, though one must wonder just what the creepily conservative teenagers of these supremely Appollonian times might see in this kind of behavior which if anybody they knew was imitating would probably cause them to immediately call the cops. These kids would feel threatened by any performer who came out today and started acting like Morrison did, so is it only the remove of a decade that allows them to feel safe enjoying his antics? Or is it that, just like they could conceivably march happily off to get shot to pieces in El Salvador or Afghanistan to the tune of "The Unknown Soldier" without perceiving any irony, so they can take the life and death of Jim Morrison as just one more TV show with a great soundtrack? And could it be that they are right? If Jim Morrison cared so little about his life, was so willing to make it amount to one huge alcoholic exhibitionistic joke, why should they or we or anybody finally care, except insofar as the seamy details provide trashy entertainment? Or do they, like Danny Sugerman, take exactly these rantings and pukings as evidence he was a "god" or at least a "lord?"



JOEL BRODSKY

Similarly, in the legendary Miami "cock-flashing" incident, the book reveals that likely all that really happened was he made a fool out of himself, moving entertainingly if not smoothly from "Ain't nobody gonna love my ass?" to "You're all a bunch of fuckin' idiots," surely an appropriate *hommage* to the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now*. When you're reading all of this stuff, one emotion you may well feel is *envy*, like, *I too* would like to be able to have a fullblown temper tantrum whenever I pleased, and not only get catered to by everybody around me but called a genius and an artist for letting myself act out this way. Or actually, any of us who aren't catered to in this way can count ourselves lucky, because it's supremely unhealthy. In a way, Jim Morrison's life and death could be written off as simply one of the more pathetic episodes in the history of the star system, or that offensive myth we all persist in believing which holds that artists are somehow a race apart and thus entitled to piss on my wife, throw you out the window, smash up the joint and generally do whatever they want. I've seen a lot of this over the years, and what's most ironic is that it always goes under the assumption that to deny them these outbursts would somehow be curbing their creativity, when the reality, as far as I can see, is that it's exactly such insane *tolerance* of another insanity that also contributes to them drying up as artists. Because how can you finally create anything real or beautiful when you have absolutely zero input from the real world, because everyone around you is catering to and sheltering you? You can't, and this system is I'd submit why we've seen almost all our rock 'n' roll heroes who, unlike Morrison, did manage to survive the Sixties, end up having nothing to say. Just imagine if he was still around today, 37 years old; no way he could still be singing about chaos and revolution. There are some people who think that everything he'd been through had finally wrought a kind of hard-won wisdom in him that, had he lived, would have allowed him to mellow into perhaps less of a cultural icon and a better poet. Though there is another school of thought which holds that he'd said it all by the first Doors album, and everything from there on led downhill.

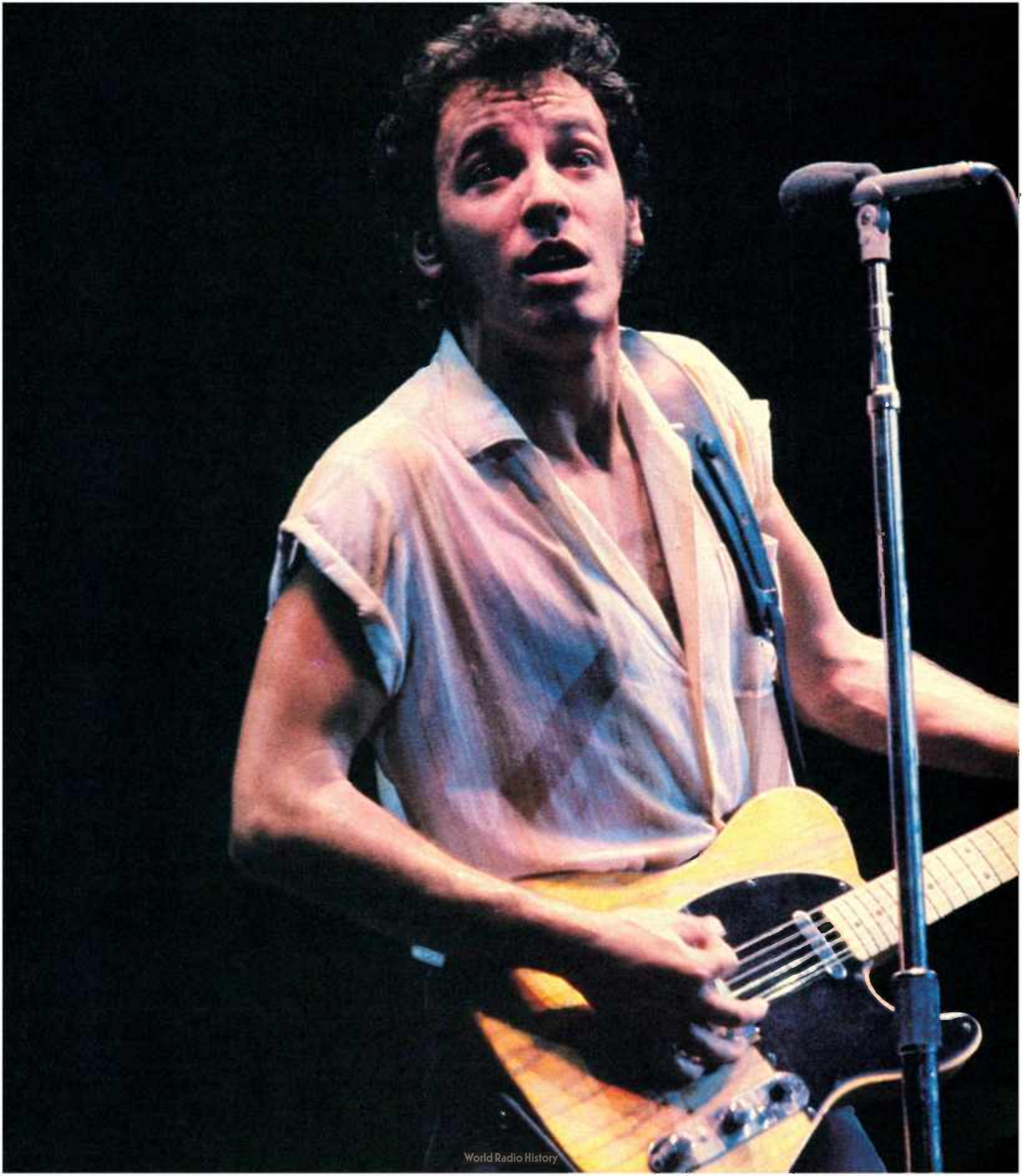
My response is somewhere in between. I never took Morrison seriously as the Lizard King, but I'm a Doors fan today as I was in 1967; what it came down to fairly early on for me, actually, was accepting the Doors' limitations and that Morrison would

never be so much Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Villon as he was a Bozo Prince. Surely he was one father of New Wave, as transmitted through Iggy and Patti Smith, but they have proven to be in greater or lesser degree Bozos themselves. One thing that can never be denied Morrison is that at his best (as well as perhaps his worst, or some of it at any rate) he had style, and as he was at his best as a poet of dread, desire and psychic dislocation, so he was also at his best as a clown. So it's no wonder our responses got, and remain, a little confused.

Certainly there are great Bozo moments scattered through the Doors' records: the mock-portentousness of the "Do you remember when we were in Africa?" coda to "Wild Child," the drunken yowling sermon *Yew CAN-NOT pe-TISH-SHON the lo-WARD with PRAYyer* at the beginning of "The Soft Parade"; the whole idea of songs like "Five to One" and "Land Ho," extending to the rhythmic bounce of the latter. Hopkins and Sugerman point out the line *I see the bathroom is clear* in "Hyacinth House," and of course there are many here among us who always thought "The End" was but a joke, not to mention the scream of the butterfly. I recall sitting in another hippie pad, in Berkeley during the Summer of Love, when one night in our dope smoking circle on the floor we were not at all nonplussed to hear the FM deejay take off "The End" halfway through and bury it with snide comments before returning to his fave rave Frisco group; admittedly there was probably some Frisco vs. L.A. chauvinism at work there, but we laughed right along with him and at this "masterpiece." Finally, the Bozo Classic to end 'em all was probably *Absolutely Live*, which included such high points as Morrison stopping "When the Music's *Over*" to scream at the audience to shut up; the way he says *Pritty neat, pritty neat, pritty good, pritty good* before "Build Me A Woman," which begins with the line, *I got the poontang blues*; the intro to "Close to You": *Ladies and gentlemen . . . I don't know if you realize it, but tonight you're in for a special treat*—crowd cheers wildly—*No, no, not that, not that . . . . . last time it happened grown men were weeping, policemen were turning in their badges . . .*, and, best of all, the (almost certainly improvised) sung intro to "Break on Through #2": *Dead cat in a top hat suckin' on a young man's blood/wishin' that he could come . . . . thinks he can kill and slaughter/thinks he can shoot my daughter . . . dead cats/dead rat/thinks he's an aristocrat/that's crap . . .*—true street poetry indeed. Plus the bonus of a brief reprise of the *Petition the Lord with prayer* bit, in which this time he sounds like no one so much as Lenny Bruce doing Oral Roberts in his "Religions, Inc." routine—listen to 'em and compare.

In the end, perhaps all the moments like these are his real legacy to us, how he took all the dread and fear and even explosions into seeming freedom of the Sixties and made them first seem even more bizarre, dangerous and apocalyptic than we already thought they were, then turned everything we were taking so seriously into a big joke midstream. Of course, there are still the other songs too, which will always be starkly poetic in their evocations of one *gazing on a city under television skies*, perhaps the best conjurings of the L.A. myth in popular song: "End of the Night," "Moonlight Drive," "People Are Strange," "My Eyes Have Seen You," "Cars Hiss by my Window," "L.A. Woman," "Riders on the Storm." But even in these there are lines, all the "Mr. Mojo Risings," that give away his own sense of humor about, if not his talents as a poet, certainly his own persona and even the very real way in which he let his pop stardom lead him unto a betrayal of his poetic gifts. And perhaps what we finally conclude is that it's not really necessary to separate the clown from the poet, that they were in fact inextricably linked, and that even as we were lucky not to have been around any more than our fair share of "Dionysian" infants, so we were lucky to get all the great music on these albums, which is going to set rock 'n' roll standards for a long time to come.

*Jerry Hopkins and Daniel Sugarman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, Warner Books, 1980.



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

ROCK

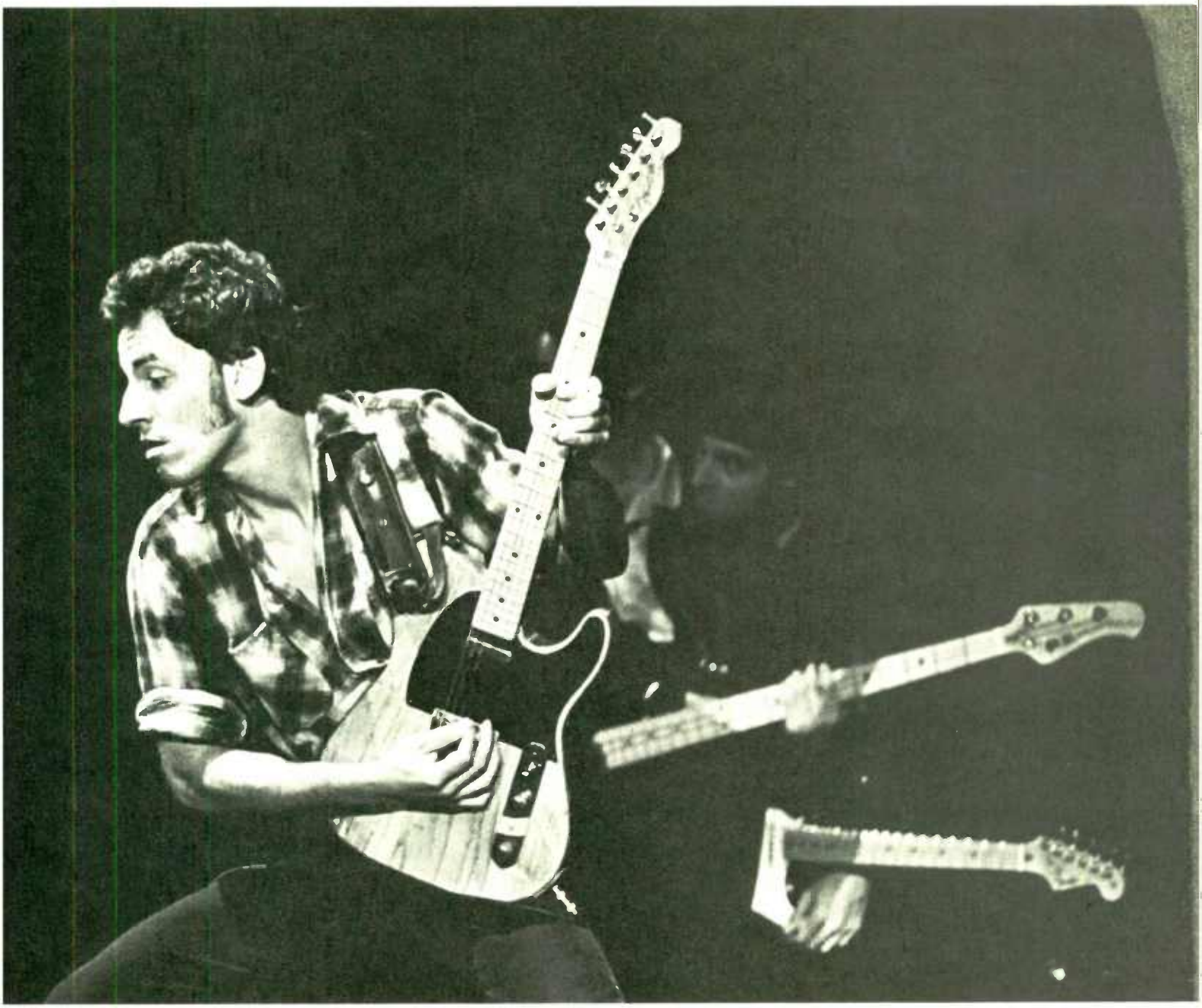
'n' roll came into this world about the same time Bruce Springsteen did. That's some 30 years of history, and you have to ask, after watching him work since *The River* was released in October 1980, if any prisoner of rock 'n' roll ever stomped the stageboards as concentratedly long and hard as Springsteen has these past months.

At this writing, I've seen 15 concerts and a club date since the *River* tour started, seen Springsteen and the E Street Band play hard by the banks of the Mississippi, the Monongahela and the Hackensack. In that time I've vacillated from fan to journalist to fanatic to doubter—so doubtful of wanting to hear "Thunder Road" or "Rosalita" one more time that my ardent belief in his supremacy went skittering away until I caught up to it one night in a clamorous, claustrophobic sweatbox of a club in Jersey.

On October 11, before the album was even in the stores, Bruce played Chicago's Uptown Theater. Fresh from a plane ride and a sprint by a cab down Broadway, I got through the door of the homey, antique 4,700-seater just as he was introducing the fourth song—"For You": "I wrote this when I was 22 or 23, I guess. Some fella who works here asked for this one—so this is for you, whoever you are . . ." It was clear from the outset that this was to be a tour conducted on a human scale—that Springsteen believed if he, and the musicians, and the security people did their job right, the stardom and money and even the esthetic would take care of themselves. He introduced "Promised Land"

PHOTO BY MARK MANDER

CHRIS WALTER/RETNA LTD



It's called pacing, and when the shows were at their peak, it seemed like no one could be better at it—three-plus hours of steady absorption in what was going on onstage. Part of the secret was the nearly absolute cooperation he got from his audience, who could be stilled or called upon to sing along at will. Seeing him so energetic in city after city, I trusted that he really was getting his inspiration directly from the audience and their belief in him—a model tradesman, and, for the ones who waited outside the stage doors after a gig till three or four in the morning, a saint of patience.

Riding from Rochester to Buffalo early in 1981 he had been talking about how much the notion of "Come out tonight!" meant to him, and the gesture he made at some gray tract houses on the right of the highway seemed to say they weren't that different from the state penitentiary on the left—if people stayed caged in them. He reminisced about a tour several years back, when his equipment trucks were the first thing to haul into Buffalo after a week of blizzard snows, and how the local kids had been ready to burst when they got to the arena.

There was a bleak sun fighting the chill when we got out of the camper in Buffalo, and Springsteen invited me for a walk downtown. He stomped along in the snowdrifts with zest, grinning through what must have been an angry pain in his injured ankle. Stopping to eat at MacDonald's, we started talking about what might constitute the good life. "You buy a house," he said. "The next thing you're getting furniture, and . . . I've just always lived in rented places. It's always been a rock 'n' roll tradition to keep moving, that stuff goes way back with musicians, as far as you can go. Movin' on through is fine with me.

Going to where the people are, going to their towns, that's always been the thing with me. You want to cut down on that distance between the audience and the guy makin' the record. When we finished this album, I just said, 'I want to play every place, just put me everywhere' and by the end of this tour that's

DAVID PETERS

what we'll try to do. Except this time instead of just the United States it's gonna be all over the world.

That's it for me—one night in some town, you pack it up and do it again someplace else and that's the reward. It is its own reward."

For a good long while in this year of some 200 concert dates, Springsteen did seem to take an almost kidlike delight in his work. Miami Steve Van Zandt, who likes airplane trips about as much as he likes cold weather ("Miami Steve cheats death once again," he said upon deplaning in Minneapolis) could always be cajoled into having fun onstage. Clarence Clemons, who leaned back in a van one morning with eyes closed and sang, *Early in the morning airplane whistle blows/Man rises from work and knows not where he goes* managed to keep blowing hard and still retain his title as the hardest-living E-Streeter. In one town a note pinned on dressing room door said "Mr. Clemons' room—everyone stay out (do yourself a favor)."

But by the time of the Meadowlands Arena gigs the excitement of the basic repertoire seemed to be leaking out. Bruce had played nearly every corner of the States, traveled to Europe for 33 ecstatically received concerts and a warm reception from the often-skeptical English press ("If at times Springsteen strays too near the edge and stumbles down the slopes towards sentimentality," wrote *Melody Maker*, "It's a mistake that's dwarfed by the magnitude of his overall achievement." Still, the high points of the opening night at the New Jersey arena were the unfamiliar songs—"Johnny Bye Bye," about Elvis' death, "Trapped" (adapted from a Jimmy Cliff song), "Jole Blon" (the traditional song he hotrodded into a hit for Gary U.S. Bonds) and, during the encore, Tom Waits' "Jersey Girl."

Also welcome were two John Fogerty tunes, "Who'll Stop the Rain" and "Rockin' All Over the World."

He did Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" on the last night of the Meadowlands stand. As he was strumming the intro, somebody in the upper tier heaved a firecracker out over the crowd. Bruce stopped cold, cussed the perpetrator out, and added, "Whoever threw that—you are no friend of mine." He sounded angry, betrayed, and the mood turned dingy. By show's end, the Mitch Ryder medley, even as it got the whole brightly lit house dancing, sounded *pro forma*.

The thing that struck me was that these boys had dates booked through mid-September; here it was early July and the Spirit was lacking. If it hadn't been so worrisome I might not have driven down to the Jersey shore town of Red Bank, where Clarence's nightclub, Big Man's West, was to open with the ill-concealed surprise appearance of Bruce and the gang.

It was a lovely summer night, but inside the just-refurbished club, the air conditioning had broken down. During a set from The Proof, the temperature began to rise. As Bruce's set neared, around one a.m., the crowd was sullenly sucking down

drinks and sweating shoulder to shoulder, 400 of us. Never was a sound check so impatiently watched. People stripped whatever clothing they decently could from their glistening backs. At least one girl fainted.

What happened next made up for it all. "One-two," said Bruce into the mike, "One-two. This is our special weight watchers' set." They ground into "Ramrod," taking it slow and sultry, then Chuck Berry's "Around and Around." Springsteen had been getting in the mood by degrees, dodging fishy looks from the sweating band (you got the idea this appearance was at his insistence). But abruptly, Roy Bittan unleashed a pixilated stream of bright, boogie-woogie notes, Springsteen suddenly seemed to grow a yard taller. He jumped nearly into the crowd, spraying an arc of sweat before him: *It's too goddamn hot! Yeah the place was packed. . . '*

. Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues" ("This is a night for bar music") was marked by chiming guitar interplay between Bruce and Miami. His white strappy T-shirt turning gray with perspiration, Bruce began "Jole Blon" hollering, got the crowd singing along on the sha-la-la-'s, then told them to keep it up as he moved in on the mike and whispered a couple verses urgently. *On the banks of the river,* he ended, jaw jutting, *I'll take you for my bride.* It was a moment to give you chills, instinctive and impassioned, and it restored what I'd felt was missing at the Meadowlands. Here he was doing it all, for a few minutes, for a lucky 400. The band blew like mad through "You Can't Sit Down," and a jolly, springing "Cadillac Ranch," before Bruce slapped his arms down to his sides and yelled "Game called on account of heat!" on his way out. The Big Man thanked everybody, saying goodnight while they hooted and whistled gratefully. When the cheering didn't stop, he gave them a sidelong look. "The boss has left the building," he said.

by asking, "How many of you guys are living away from home right now? and before singing "Fire," which found the stage flooded with purple light and Bruce under a red spotlight, he asked, "Have you ever been in love?" True to the themes of the album, this tour would often focus on the scary business of marriage and commitment—the ties that bind.

At 10:15 p.m., after "Jungleland," the band took their break. Bruce came back on in a young-Elvis sportscoat—you could make out the wide shoulders faintly silhouetted on the darkened stage—and a gunshot-loud drumbeat from Max Weinberg kicked off "Good Rockin' Tonite," which sent most of the crowd into the aisles, doing every kind of monkey, slop and insane jitterbugging step ever seen. (Springsteen's dancing, early in the tour, was truly remarkable—a skipping, log-rolling, kung-fu fighting series of moves. After he injured his right ankle in Maryland, stumbling over the spotlight used for the coda to "Wreck On the Highway," he was virtually immobilized that week at Madison Square Garden. But he still exuded the kind of rooted energy you see in King Kong or Willie Dixon.) That night in Chicago, after "Because The Night" and before "Stolen Car," he sang one line from a Fifties hit as a slow, sing-song threnody: *Why do lovers break each others' hearts?*

"I'm a thinkin' fool," Bruce declared to Dave Marsh in their 1981 *Musician* conversation, and what he was thinking hard about shows up in *The River*: "The Ties That Bind," "Two Hearts," "I Wanna Marry You," "The River," "Point Blank," "Fade Away," "Stolen Car" and "Drive all Night" comprise a very purposeful meditation on "relationships." In opposition to that world, or excluded from it, are the lost souls of such driven songs as "Jackson Cage," *Into a row of houses she just melts away,* "Hungry Heart" *We took what we had and ripped it apart* and "You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)" *She didn't get*

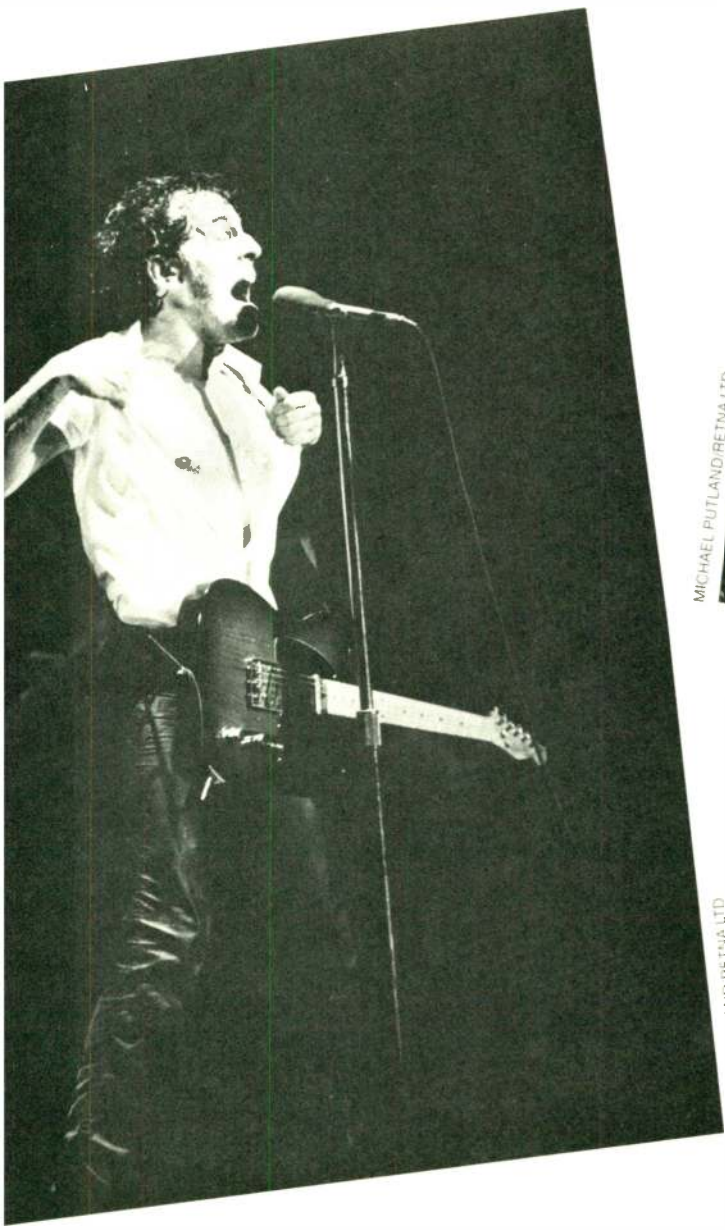
EBET ROBERTS

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD

me excited she just made me feel mean.

Even though mother-in-laws get their good-natured raking-over ("Sherry Darling") the people who take fate's punishment on *The River* are the ones who choose to muddle through alone. The hyperbolic swain of "I'm A Rocker" or "Crush On You" might offer some comfort, but as Springsteen has pointed out in saying that "Ramrod" is actually a sad song—because nobody's going to ramrod "forevermore"—the comfort is temporary. The prevailing visual image I get from *The River* jumps between two Edward Hopper paintings—*Summer Evening*, and *Four Lane Road*. In the former, a couple perches on a porch rail—a cold pastoral of young love. In the latter, a wife leans out a gas station window, yakking at the back of her husband's head as he sits squinting up the road. They each have half a smile. Experienced of each other, they have reached an accomodation. As Springsteen said to me deep in an interview: "My mother and father, they've got a very deep love because they know and understand each other in a very realistic way."

Springsteen has a definite symbology, and it includes cars



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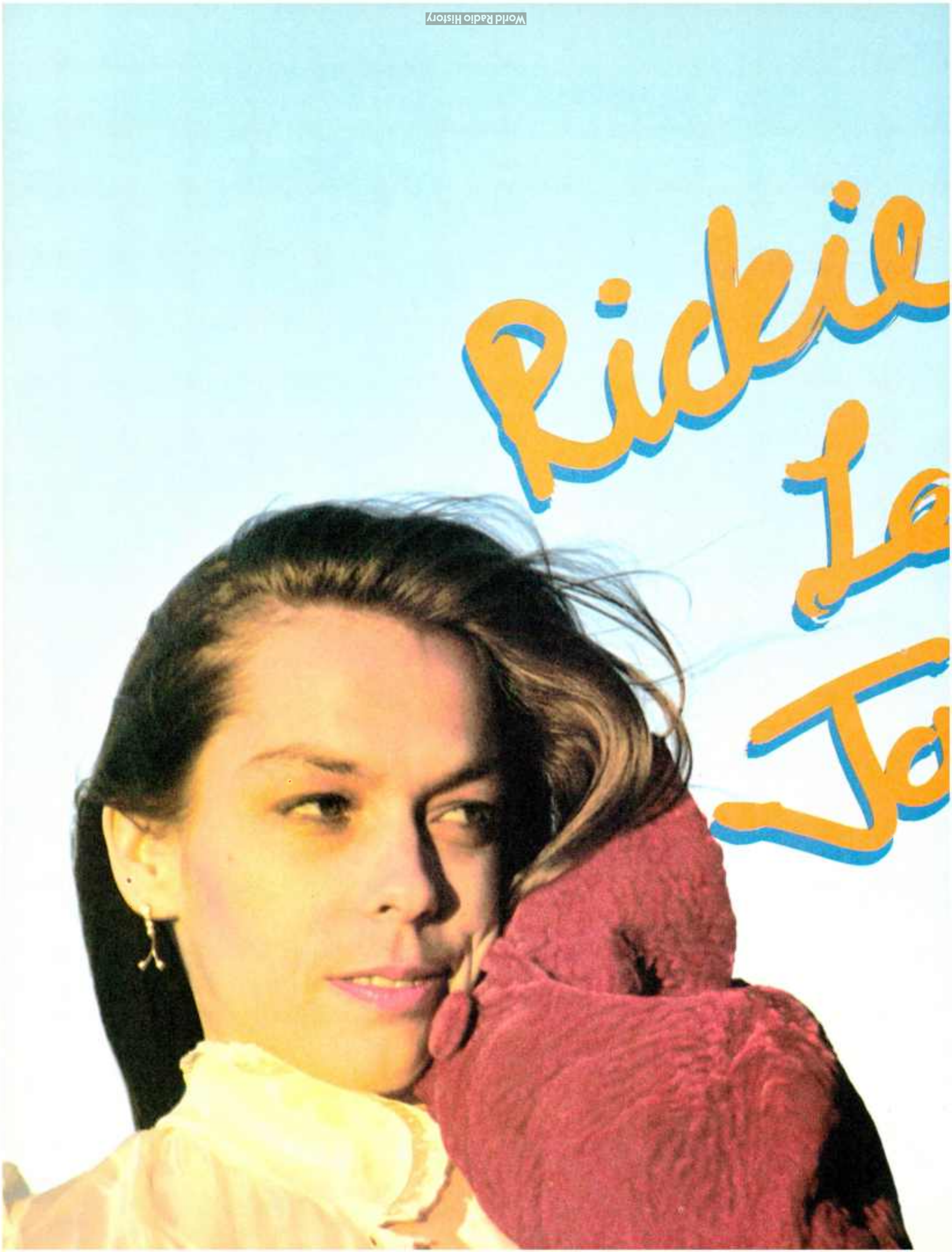
and the road. In *The River*, that road, which looks to offer freedom, turns menacing-drowning-deep. The price his characters pay for bad faith in love is to become the kind of ghost who drives endlessly in "Stolen Car." To carry through (and put aside) the analogy to Hopper, there are two ways you can end up in this would of hard choices—either holding hands as one of a pair of mimes with the void at your back *Two Comedians*, or going around the dark bend in the road seen in *Gas*—headed, inevitably for your "Wreck On the Highway."

"Wreck" is my favorite song on the two-record set, which it closes. Thrumming along to an organ line that evokes "Red River Valley," it encapsulates all the unanswerable questions on the record. The song, as Marsh points out, is both dream and nightmare, a poignant piece of sung cinema that always provided the soberest moment of the night as Springsteen went to one knee, a disbelieving onlooker at his own dreamt death. He usually did "Point Blank," another method-acting job, next. Then, having pasted the audience to their seats in gloom, he would slam into "Crush On You" or "Ramrod."



Hanging out on the corner of commerce and art, a pirate who might sail and the thin thread of light...

By Jon Pareles

Rickie Lee Jones just doesn't add up. With *Pirates*, her second album, she's established herself as the equal (at least) of any other songwriter in pop, using every technique of the big-budget mainstream for songs the mainstream never dreamed of: extended, associative songs that touch on topics like life after death, girlfriend-beating, police murders, and the real meaning of rock 'n' roll. *Pirates*' five- and six- and eight-minute tracks prove that long pop songs can be something more than stretched-out or slowed-down singles; that melodies can be interwoven and developed as well as stuck together; that pop can be dramatic without being melodramatic; that songs can be intelligent and even ironic without becoming cynical. Jones' arrangements and her direction of the best-and-brightest studio band money can buy is likely to refute every cliche about session men: she gets them to play soulfully as well as precisely on tunes that are determinedly unconventional and unmechanical — tunes that breathe. And her own singing *swings* in a way that few her age (twenty-six) and generation (rock 'n' roll) seem to be able to carry off. Although Jones didn't know it when she gave this interview the week *Pirates* came out, the intricacy of her songs hasn't made them inaccessible; *Pirates* bulleted into the top 10 almost immediately. In short, Jones is the kind of innovator pop needs. And, as the two-year genesis of *Pirates* suggests, she's a hard-working perfectionist.

Yet she hardly comes across as a pop professional. Her songs are magnificently crafted, but they've got a streak of something like mystical innocence. Jones doesn't seem to dominate her tunes; it's more as if she's swept up in them, her voice disappearing in and out of the horn section, her lyrics dissolving into images that are as inconclusive, as intuitive, as the music is clear. When she toured behind her 1979 debut, *Rickie Lee Jones*, she came across onstage as a sultry, nearly bawdy, take-charge gal; in conversation, she's quiet but forthcoming, without the preset answers of someone who's already had platinum-level success.

The story of Jones' life fails to resolve this contradiction. She's the daughter of a waitress and a waiter/longshoreman/gardener/sometime songwriter, and the granddaughter of one-legged vaudeville dancer Peg Leg Jones. Rickie Lee was born in Chicago, and lived with her family at various times in Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Olympia, Washington (where her mother still lives). In her teens, Jones often ran away from home; but 1973, she'd settled in Los Angeles, where she eventually ran into Tom Waits and some of the people whose first names showed up on her debut album (notably Chuck E.

MICHAEL ZAGARIS

Weiss, of "Chuck E.'s in Love" fame). For a long time she carried on a romance with Waits; her back appeared on the cover of Waits' 1978 album, *Blue Valentine*. At around the same time, a friend played one of Jones' songs, "Easy Money," for Lowell George, who decided to include it on his solo album. Through George, Jones' demo tape came into the hands of Warner Brothers A&R man/producer Lenny Waronker, who signed her and co-produced (with Russ Titleman) her debut and, two years later, *Pirates*.

Taken as a legend, Jones is great copy: Bad Girl Makes Good; From Lowlife to the Bigtime; Overnight Success from the Dark Side of L.A. Enjoyable as *Rickie Lee Jones* is, however, it's clear now that its songs were genre pieces, apprenticeships. They were just the thing to pep up sagging AOR formats, since they fit in but had flair to spare. And with "Chuck E.'s in Love" finger-popping out of AM radio, Jones was a sensation. She toured bigger and better halls, won Grammy and NARM New Artist awards. Then she disappeared.

The tour knocked her out, and the sudden fame warped her perspective; Jones ended up making major changes. She and Waits broke up once and for all. A depressed Jones went to live with her mother in Olympia, and eventually began working on new songs, using a music room at a nearby Catholic college to write in because a girlfriend had a key. When she got her spirit back, Jones moved to New York, and unexpectedly began a new romance with Sal Bernardi. She recorded *Pirates* in two stretches, in spring of 1980 and from November 1980 to April of this year, in Los Angeles, and by the time she completed the album Bernardi had earned co-credit on "Traces of the Western Slopes"; he sings the first verse.

The amazing thing about *Pirates* is that it's not *Rickie Lee Jones, Part 2*, which would probably have satisfied Warner Brothers and radio and the great unwashed. Everything about it is chancier, more daring, more original—not only the subject matter and the length of the songs, but the rhythms and harmonies as well. While two years is a long time between albums, *Pirates* sounds like Jones has been woodshedding for twice that time; she's learned to use twisted chords Steely Dan would be proud of and horn charts that might be worthy of Carla Bley. (Since Jones doesn't write music, she uses Tom Scott to transcribe her ideas, but considering his other work, she doubtless deserves full credit for the results.) Even in "Pirates," which uses a standard bluesy vamp, the horns poke in and out of the rhythm in novel ways, and on "Traces of the Western Slopes", the combinations of brass and saxes and harmonicas is absolutely eerie.

Pirates is most assuredly a pop album, justifiably proud of its complex structures and the studio craft that's been used to realize them. *Pirates* also reaffirms, however paradoxically, the link between the best pop and jazz. It's not just the playful, improvisatory vocals, or the use of horns as contrapuntal voices—it's Jones' sense of rhythm, which comes directly from jazz. She obviously demands from her session players that the tracks flow, and she virtually insures that they do by continually changing up the tempo, both in her singing and her arrangements.

MUSICIAN: Do you have any kind of writing discipline? Do you sit at a certain place, at a certain time, or something like that?

JONES: No. (laughs) I rented a place to go work, but I never go there. I can't work until I'm ready. I have to be by myself, with nothing else on my mind—nothing like a tour—and I have to be in some kind of slightly adverse situation. If I'm completely relaxed, with nothing challenging me, I won't concentrate. Writing comes out of trying to get something out that I can't get out any other way. I think I'm coming to the point; I'm growing out of adolescence, even though it took a lot longer than I though it would. I walk around with ideas in my head a lot of times, and I'm holding off before I sit and write another record. It's difficult at this point to write because *Pirates* is just coming out. I have to let this one finish.

MUSICIAN: I think that you do have a constituency as a personality, not just as a girl singer with a hit song. Which is a neat trick.

JONES: Not if you *are* a person. If you really are a character you can't help but put it across. And if you're a performer, you know how to put it across. I love to perform and I'm good at it. I'm comfortable on stage and I put it all out as much as I can.

MUSICIAN: Is it frustrating to wait two years betwen tours?

JONES: No, I didn't want to play. I'd go down to the Surf Maid or something and sit and play. It's a little frustrating; I wish I had a band that was always around and I could call them up and say, "Let's go play." And a tour is really a high-pressure situation, it's nerve-wracking. The last tour, I was out four or five months, I'd never toured, and when I came off the road I was a *mess*. I was drinking a lot on that tour. . . I'd like to have a band though. . . But I object morally to paying someone a steady retainer to play with me.

MUSICIAN: You could probably find volunteers.

JONES: The problem with that is that even though they are good players and they're real dedicated, they're not professional. I'm struggling with that now, because for me the band that I went out with—there were times when I felt what they were playing was inappropriate. The fusion would come out, and we didn't connect.

MUSICIAN: It seems that one problem with being a recognizable star is that it can drive you off the street, into the music biz—you can lose your material.

JONES: You can if you're attracted to that to begin with. But if you're not interested you can still keep your feet on the ground. If all the hype impresses you, and you buy your own press, then you'll lose yourself in it. I think that happens to so many people. You can flirt with that initial superficial attraction, but it's shallow and empty and lonely, and you can forget who you are and the things that make you a human being. Part of holding the record off this long was to stop something like that. It was carrying me away.

MUSICIAN: Do you know what pulled you out? What kept you going?

JONES: My love of my art. I struggled too long and worked too hard on those songs. If I was going to give up, I couldn't make them as fine as I want to; I couldn't go as far as I'd seen myself going if I was straight and tuned in and right there with it.

MUSICIAN: On your first album, you had a lot more wisecracks; the songs on *Pirates* seem a lot deeper.

JONES: They are. These lyrics are like poetry. The first record, I was writing song lyrics, so they were simpler, they were more structured. Also, I was younger when I wrote all those songs—I was 22 years old—and I didn't know as much about how to write a song. And they're good, but with this music—especially with "Western Slopes"—I worked on that so hard for six months, I have stacks of drafts of that. The problem was, I knew what I wanted to say, but I was writing in my head on three different levels, and it's a very difficult thing to do, to write poetry on this many levels and say what you want to say.

I have a couple of different areas that I want to go into ultimately. I have a real dedication to writing songs, and to fulfilling myself, and it's real important that I do both. I don't really think I'll make myself inaccessible, because, well, I don't want to. I want to reach people. You can write songs for yourself and feel good, but for it to mean something, you have to give it to somebody.

MUSICIAN: Writers have editors; songwriters don't.

JONES: Lenny Waronker and Russ Titleman help me. Lenny mostly. He'll say, "I like that part, I like that part,"—he'll never say, "I don't like that part," it's all positive reinforcement—and I understand that if he doesn't get it, I know I've failed to get something across, because he's completely responsive. That's what it comes down to; you can be yourself *automatically*, you don't have to work at getting it across to yourself, you have to work at getting it across to someone else.

You're never sure that anybody else is going to get it. I don't

know with this record. I don't know if this time I'll get across to the mass of people, because the record's not as simple. People like simplicity, they don't want to be bothered with having to work. These songs pretty much demand that they listen.

MUSICIAN: Your new songs seem so carefully assembled. One thing that makes you sound so different is that you seem to have horns in mind while you're writing.

JONES: Horn charts are just like voices to me; arranging voices and arranging horns is pretty much the same. I get to where I'm really blending voices and horns, because I have a voice that fits right in with saxaphones and horns. It's an interesting effect. And I used the harmonica with the horns this time, which I really like; in "Pirates," there's a harmonica, saxes and horns. That's a real nice sound—it takes away from the brassy horn and gives it more of a play sound, a lighter sound.

I worked on the "Traces" demo with my friend Sal Bernardi and wrote horn charts and did 'em all with harmonica. What an effect! It was great, and he's so good on the harp that he can play it like a horn, and it shifts back and forth—sometimes it sounds like a muted horn. The beginning of "Traces," that's harmonicas. That crying instrument you hear in the first couple of bars, that's a harmonica—the horns you hear for the first half of the song are harmonicas.

MUSICIAN: Did you know what you were going to come out with when you started?

JONES: What you hear is never exactly how it comes out, but I knew how I wanted it to feel, and it was real steadfast. We cut that song three times, and the third time we did it. That was the one song that I crafted bar for bar. Every bar was important, every single half note. Other songs, you give room to perform, you give room for the musicians to play.

MUSICIAN: It's got those strange pauses in it. . .

JONES: The meter changes three times. That was a lot of work on the part of the players. And yet what you try to do is keep that element of jazz and improvisation. That's the direction I'd like to go. And to do it with lyrics, in a song.

We're also going to try to put out a jazz album, of standards. Because that's my first love, to sing, and I don't do anything remotely like the standards in my own writing.

MUSICIAN: Do you listen to jazz singers, like Betty Carter?

JONES: Betty Carter—I think by far she's the greatest jazz singer. Jazz enthusiasts presume to be so hip, but most of them seem to go right by her, except the real cult.

MUSICIAN: Do you care about reviews?

JONES: I felt like they would most assuredly tear this record apart because I did so well the other time. I thought it wouldn't matter what I did, how good it was, how much time I took.

MUSICIAN: It's not really a fashionable record.

JONES: Musically, you know, I can sit and listen to it objectively, and it's *so good*. There's nothing contrived about it, it's just real pleasant, which is what I think music should be. It should give you pleasant feelings or a sad feeling or it should just evoke emotion, and I think it succeeds in doing that. Anyone who attacks it is attacking me—it's something they don't like about me—and that doesn't belong in there. That's the problem now: it's that people don't listen to the music now. They're so busy trying to assess the personalities, make stars, break stars, and it has nothing to do with the art. All of the entertainment magazines are so pseudo-hip, they jerk themselves off. Most writers are, like, "Rickie Lee Jones happened to be there, but I'm writing about myself."

MUSICIAN: Do you analyze everything you hear?

JONES: Always. I scrutinize everything I hear. I don't listen to much music now, it really bores me. I rarely listen, because I can't play music and talk, because I have to listen. It's like some people watching a movie; when I play a record that's all I do.

MUSICIAN: Do you read for ideas?

JONES: I have trouble finishing books, but I start a lot of them. I have a real short attention span. My favorite book is poetry by Rimbaud. It's so rich, it's out there on the western slopes, it's beautiful.

MUSICIAN: For someone with a short attention span, it's odd that you'd work two years on an album.

JONES: But that's my own work. And I know that it's really important to get it done fast, because if you don't get your point across and get in touch with what you want to say and say it, you'll spend six months trying to figure out what it was.

MUSICIAN: Is that what happened with "Traces of the Western Slopes?"

JONES: To a point. I was trying to say something at such a nebulous level. I was talking to myself about death and trying to write something to myself about it. I saw this landscape, and I saw it so clear, this little slope, and this slate-dark, purple-black background, and it was foggy, and it just was sitting here in the middle of this desert, with a post and a street like a Fellini scene. And I was just looking at it and trying to describe this place, and also trying to write this scenario. One level—"we go down. . ." —was about these kids and these people and where they go and what happens to them, and the other level was about me—"I'm going down to the far side of the track and I can't get back. . ." Maybe I was trying too hard to say these things in the song. And I had a deadline, and I had to let it go, and that was a serious lesson to learn: let it go. I'd still be working on that—I would never be satisfied, because it's a question that will remain unanswered, till I go there. The other problem was, I didn't have a story—the story was unfinished and I was trying to finish the story and I couldn't because I was drawing on my own life. So it's left unfinished and that's as it should be: you simply ask the questions.

MUSICIAN: Do you practice your instruments? Do you want to be a better pianist, or guitarist?

JONES: I'm gonna start working again. I haven't picked up my guitar in well over a year, I haven't played it. The problem was I wanted a piano, and when I made the record I rented a piano. I *finally* had one, so I learned to play the piano. I definitely want to be able to execute the things I hear, and I can't hear. I can play well enough to accompany myself, and I know enough about music so I can play some riffs and things, but it's very frustrating.

MUSICIAN: You didn't have a piano when you wrote the songs for the first record?

JONES: No, I wrote "After Hours" on the guitar, and then I transferred it to the piano. The songs that are on the piano I wrote after I started to make that record.

MUSICIAN: Now you're going to have to get your guitar calluses back.

JONES: I really wish I was interested in guitar, but I'm not. An acoustic guitar is always so clumsy. I bought an electric guitar and that feels much more comfortable. I played guitar for twelve years, and I'm still uncomfortable making chords.

MUSICIAN: How do you practice singing? Do you sing in the shower?

JONES: I've been real lazy, not really practicing. But I usually just sing all the time. If I hear somebody sing something that challenges me, I'll work on it. Before I did this record, I first started doing some really serious listening to Donald Fagen on *The Royal Scam*. He sang incredible on that, he's really soulful, so I would play that record and sing along. But there's usually no particular person that I practice with. I like to sing with the people on the radio, the black church—when they yell, I yell back at them. That *really* gets you going.

MUSICIAN: Is that where the angels in your song come from?

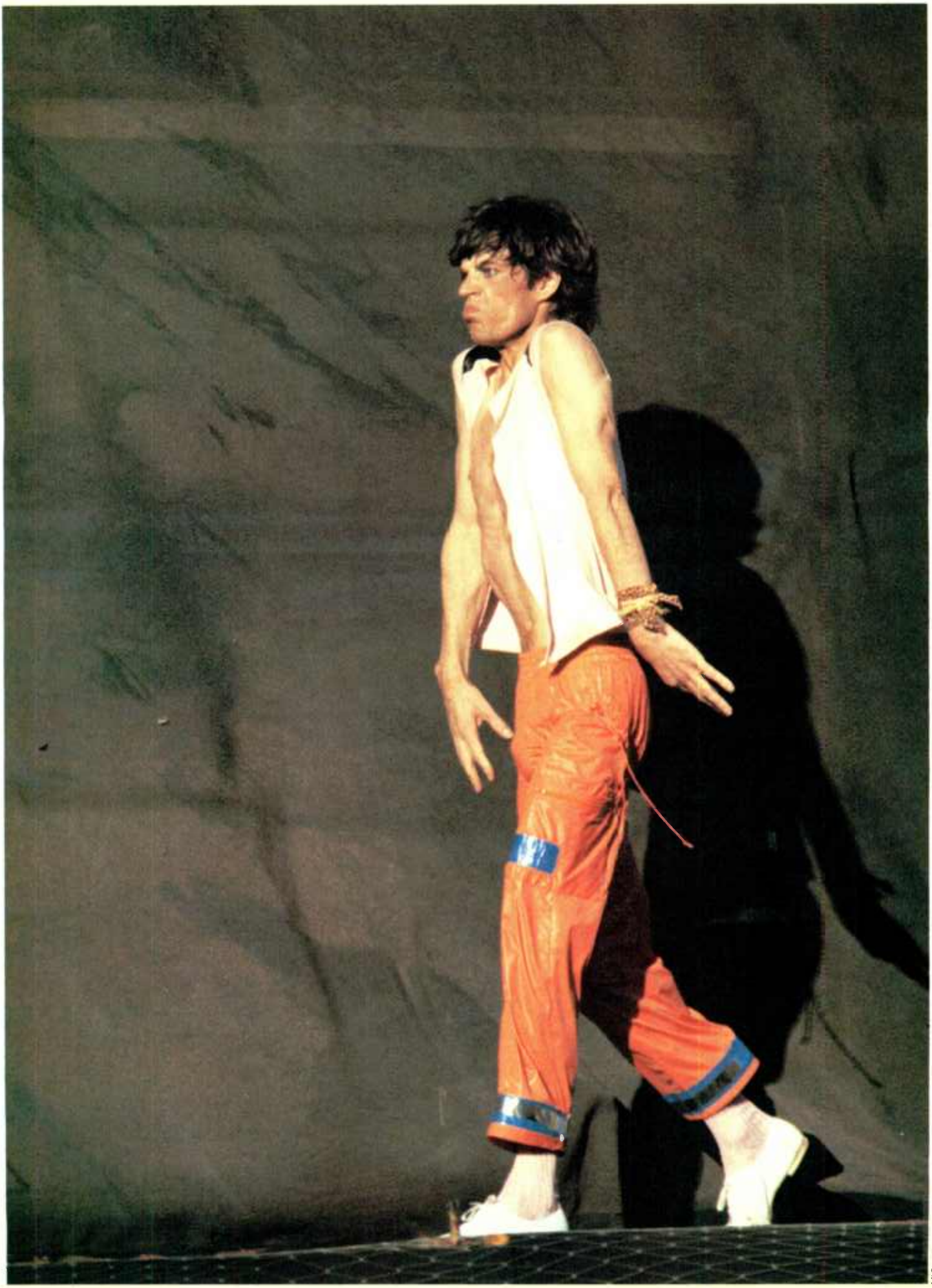
JONES: No—that's something else. I always believed that I had a guardian angel, ever since I was a little girl. I can't remember when I first thought so, but I always felt like there was some spirit protecting me. It's like there's been some little guy who follows me around wherever I go, and keeps things from getting too bad.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

BILL WYMAN ON THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE ROLLING STONES

By Pete Fornatale and Vic Garbarini

I guess the last thing most of us expected at this point was a great Stones album, but it looks like that's what's come along. By now it's apparent that *Tattoo You* is easily their best effort since *Exile on Main Street* — though in terms of style and direction it can more readily been seen as a stripped-down, modernized successor to *Sticky Fingers*. In either case, that leaves almost a decade during which the World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band spent an inordinate amount of time wandering in the deserts of disco and decadence. But why quibble? The Stones are back with an album that reaffirms the rock 'n' roll verities of directness, intensity and simplicity that earned them the title in the first place. But amidst the hosannas a few sour notes can be heard: Mick and Keith were reportedly feuding in the studio again, while persistent reports in the English press had bassist Bill Wyman exiting the band in the near future. Jagger himself was seen by more than one member of the press speaking with Busta Cherry Jones about handling the bass chores on the current tour. By his own admission, Wyman has always been somewhat of an outsider as far as the rest of the band is concerned. Long known as the



MICHAEL ZAGARIS

"quiet Stone." Bill has been branching out recently with a number of projects, including: a solo album on A&M which yielded a hit single, production chores on two blues and jazz records and a book of photographs about his neighbor, Marc Chagall. In the following interview Wyman delivers on his promise to us to "set the record straight on a few things." Bill considers himself the historian of the band. As such, his reminiscences have a detachment and objectivity that are surprising as well as revealing.

MUSICIAN: *Tattoo You* is being hailed as your best work since *Exile on Main Street*. Being on the inside, can you feel it as a clear step forward?

WYMAN: I think of it as the culmination of a process that began with *Some Girls*, and continued on through *Emotional Rescue* to this album; we're pretty well grounded now.

MUSICIAN: What was it that initiated this process?

WYMAN: Well, *Some Girls*, was a kind of revitalization, what with Woody joining and giving all that bubble and bounce that he's got. *Emotional Rescue* wasn't really a step forward or backward...it was moving along in the same line, but there were a few things on there, as well as on *Some Girls*, that I wasn't keen on. But as I say, the new album is basically a consolidation of the gains made on the previous two.

MUSICIAN: For me, *Tattoo You* works because it's such an effective re-affirmation of rock 'n roll basics and values that you guys have always stood for. How have you managed to stay in touch with that over the years?

WYMAN: It's probably because we listened to and played so much early blues material. Musically it was very simple, so you *had* to put a lot of feeling into it to make it work. Whenever we rehearse and learn new numbers, every other thing we play is a jam on an old Elmore James or Muddy Waters or Chuck Berry thing. I know a lot of people say, "What are you playing that old stuff for?" But we're doing it to retain the *feeling* of those blues and R&B things.

MUSICIAN: So putting that kind of quality into the basics is the key?

WYMAN: Yeah, you can't have everybody flying off everywhere and showing off your chops. Besides our chops aren't always that good! I think the great thing about the Stones is the simplicity of it—that slightly ragged rhythm that always sounds like it might fall apart by the next bar, but never does. We always have scrappy endings; we play with a kind of pulse that fluctuates between being slightly behind and slightly in front of the beat, but it swings like that. And it works for us. I hate bands that play on eights or sixteenths; there's no feel there, nothing seems to be coming from inside them.

MUSICIAN: Meanwhile, your own single "Je Suis Un Rock Star" is topping the charts in Britain and Europe, and is due for release here shortly. How does it feel to have a hit single as a solo artist after all these years as a Stone?

WYMAN: It's really exciting—it's like the first time we as a group had a hit: everything feels new again. We all have our insecurities and doubts about whether we as individuals are as good alone as our position in a famous band implies we should be. We all feel this way—Mick,Keith,Charlie,Ron—so you always try to do something outside the band to build your confidence and assuage those doubts.

MUSICIAN: Why don't you contribute material to the Stones? You can obviously write, but I can't recall anything of yours appearing on a Stones album since *Satanic Majesties*.

WYMAN: I don't think I write songs that are appropriate for the band. And, we only record once every eighteen months or so; and Mick and Keith have such a tremendous amount of material that there really isn't much room left over.

MUSICIAN: Was the new album recorded live in the studio, or did most of you lay down your parts separately?

WYMAN: No, we never do that. We always lay down the backing tracks together, meaning drums, bass, two guitars and piano; and then do the overdubbing later.

MUSICIAN: There were some reports in the press recently about Mick and Keith feuding in the studio, and even erasing each others tracks. Does this kind of craziness go on, and who has the final say as producer of a Stones album?

WYMAN: The story is that Mick and Keith are the producers. They work together on the basic tracks, but from then on they work separately and form their own opinions. So you end up with various mixes that Keith's done, as well as alternate mixes that Mick has done of the same material. At this point they haggle out which versions of each tune are best. I've never heard of them erasing each others tapes it's more a question of fighting it out over which version of any given song will appear.

MUSICIAN: Incidentally, your bass playing on the new album is superb, especially those lines on "Hang Fire"...

WYMAN: Yeah, it's nice that they turned me and Charlie up for a change! During the last few albums they've really pulled out the rhythm section much more. It used to be that only the bass drum would stand out of that mono-ish mix they'd go for.

MUSICIAN: Can you clear up this confusion in the press about the possibility of your leaving the band? Did Mick actually ask Busta Cherry Jones to replace you?

WYMAN: When that original story came out I let everybody

know it was a misquote, and that I was very upset about it. But then every few months another magazine would mention it. As for the band talking to other bass players: I was informed that when those rumors were spreading various people phoned the band to see if a replacement was needed; and that once the band was assured that I was still in the band—that I wasn't about to leave and I never was—then it was all forgotten about.

MUSICIAN: Is your reputation as an "outsider" in the band justified?

WYMAN: I've always had the feeling—whether it's actually true or false—that other members of the band have been unsure of me.

MUSICIAN: Unsure of you in what sense?

WYMAN: Because I live and treat things very normally, and they often misinterpret that as detachment. They think I'm not as interested in the band as they are because I don't want to hang out all night long jamming or listening to records. I can't live like that; I get frustrated and tense just hanging out in a room getting drunk. They always regarded it as a threat in a way, and weren't sure about me. It sounds silly after all these years, but we still don't really know each other...Within the band there's been an element of uncertainty: is Mick going to go into movies? Is Charlie going to join a jazz band? So because I detach myself from them they think I'm not interested or don't want to be part of them, which is totally untrue. I just want to have the "other" part of me separate from that, but they always saw that as a threat.

MUSICIAN: You've been described to me, on more than one occasion, as the historian of the Stones. Is that an accurate description?

WYMAN: Yeah, I am, because I'm the only one who really cares about it: no one else gives a damn, really. Charlie Watts gives his gold records away to his chauffeur, or to the taxi driver who runs him to the airport; he doesn't care about those things. So I've compiled this whole mass of stuff which I store in various places and refer to occasionally, because it really pisses me off that every time a book or article comes out the dates are

wrong...the facts...everything's wrong!

MUSICIAN: In that case, I'd like to ask you about the Stones, present and past. What's your perception of the difference between the public image of Mick Jagger and the real person?

WYMAN: It's difficult because I know both, and they both merge into his character for me—the sublime and the ridiculous! He *is* totally different in public than he is in private life. Unfortunately, he seems to think—as most of us probably do—that there's a way you react in public, and a way you react at home. Sometimes he carries his public persona over into his private life, which gets to be a real pain in the ass, because you know he's full of shit. So you have to remind him and bring him down...*Come On, Mick!* And then he comes back to normal.

MUSICIAN: Specifically, how does it manifest?

WYMAN: His voice changes, for one thing, and he starts talking with that pseudo-Southern accent. And sometimes in private he starts using a very rough, Cockney accent, which also is not his real voice. It's actually more like the way Charlie and I talk. He's getting a bit like Peter Sellers: I don't think he knows which one is the real Mick Jagger. It keeps the mystery going.

MUSICIAN: I'd think that must be fortified by the fact he's surrounded by so many images of himself that at this point...

WYMAN: Yeah, if one person walks into a crowded room he can change without even thinking about it. Keith can as well. I suppose we all do. Charlie doesn't.

MUSICIAN: I'm entitled to one cliched question this afternoon, and here it is: what is Keith Richard really like?

WYMAN: Shy. Introverted. He's very nice, really. He can be a real bust, though. (Laughs) If he's in his regular mood, he's

great. But if he's in a bad mood you can't be in a good mood with him, because he kind of dominates the mood of the room. So you just leave it for a few hours and then he's alright. As I say, he's very introverted and to overcome that he makes the appearance of being very carefree and brash, flailing his arms and rubbing his hair when he comes into the room. He's a bit insecure, I think.

MUSICIAN: Fans tend to worry about him. Is that worry misplaced or...

WYMAN: No, *I* tend to worry about him sometimes! So I don't think it's misplaced at all. But we're not entitled to worry about him, really, because he doesn't worry about us worrying about him, does he? He's his own man—he is what he is. Sometimes it's a little difficult to communicate with him, that's all. Because he does keep things inside and burn them up inside himself. It's a bit too personal to go digging in there, because he won't talk about personal things.

MUSICIAN: Has he always been like that?

WYMAN: Yeah, except for the first three years of the band he's always been a little bit difficult to relate to. Maybe because we're totally different people.

MUSICIAN: Was Woody destined to be a Stone? How's he doing from a group standpoint?

WYMAN: I think he's getting too much like Keith. And one Keith's enough. Musically, he's fine. But it's like Keith and the shadow, in a way. Woody wasn't quite like that when he joined.

MUSICIAN: How was he different then?

WYMAN: He was just all fun and games and laughing. He united the band much more when we were kind of drifting apart, personality-wise. It's very frustrating to be in the same band that

MICHAEL ZAGARIS

Disillusioned by the excesses of stoned arena fans, the Stones included more intimate dates at small clubs on their last tour.

long,because what you liked in 1963, you don't necessarily like in 1981. That's why Woody does solo albums, and Mick Taylor probably got very frustrated, and Brian Jones, too. So Charlie has to play with jazz band, and I had to do some solo albums and some producing, and Mick did movies. You *do* have other things that you want to do. When we all came into this band, we probably never thought it'd last more than two or three years, and suddenly it's a third of your life. That's the whole thing about leaving after twenty years, because it's enough for me. No matter how great it is. Wonderful to do it, and be in that band, but I've got so many other things that I want to do in my life.

MUSICIAN: How was the band different from when Brian Jones was alive?

WYMAN: Brian was an experimenter. He could pick up any instrument that was lying around the studio and figure out how to use it. He managed to get "Paint It Black" out of a sitar, and "Lady Jane" from a dulcimer. Marimbas, dulcimer, stand-up harp—he'd find a line on them that sounded reasonably correct, and he'd just do it. But he lost the ability to progress on his original instrument, rhythm guitar, and sometimes lead. He compensated by playing other instruments, but suddenly we only had one guitar player. And there was no interplay between Keith and Brian, which was really funky in the early days. When Mick Taylor came he could also play just about anything, but he didn't want to because he wanted to be a lead guitarist. Besides, we didn't need him to because by that time we were using people like Nicky Hopkins and Billy Preston on piano or Ray Cooper on percussion. We were bringing in really good people to do the things that we used to do.

MUSICIAN: When you think about Brian Jones now, is it likely to be a happy or a sad memory?

WYMAN: Happy, definitely. He was an innovator in England in '62-'63 when no one knew about blues...I mean *real* blues like Elmore James and John Lee Hooker. He was the first guy to play bottleneck slide guitar in England. He and Keith would sit around and listen to those albums and work out every last note perfectly, and that's what we used to play.

MUSICIAN: Did Brian reach his own point of frustration within the band?

WYMAN: There came a time when he wanted to write for the band, but he couldn't. He was just not able to produce a song for the Rolling Stones, which frustrated him. Remember, he was the leader of the band in the beginning: Brian Jones formed the Rolling Stones, not Mick Jagger. And Brian got more fan mail during the first year and a half than anybody else. When the limelight went away from him and Mick started getting all the attention, Brian found it difficult to deal with.

MUSICIAN: When did the attention start to shift to Mick?

WYMAN: When we went to America. In the U.S. the public goes straight for the singer. Mick got the attention and became the "leader," as it were. Because he was a bit...egotistical in that way.

MUSICIAN: So how did the Rolling Stones deal with celebrity when it arrived?

WYMAN: The first time we ever had an article in an English music paper was March or April of '63, in the *New Record Mirror*, there was our picture with the headline, "New Rhythm and Blues Band in Richmond Driving People Crazy." So when I went home on the train that night I neatly folded the magazine so that the picture was uppermost, and I sat there with it on my lap waiting to be recognized. That's how naive I was!...And it didn't happen. (Laughs) And then when it finally did start happening I wished to hell it hadn't because it's so boring, with people bugging you all the time for this and that.

MUSICIAN: July 5, 1969 must have been an emotional day. On the one hand, you were introducing a new guitarist at that Hyde Park Free Concert, and on the other hand, it was just two days after Brian's death...

WYMAN: We came very close to canceling the whole thing. Brian had left the band about a month before, and he'd come

around to tell us that he was getting a band together with Alexis Koerner. He was really excited about his new project, and he was kind of hanging out with us a bit. Then we got the news while we were recording in London and, of course, we all thought we should cancel. Then we realized that Brian would have probably wanted us to go on—it had been announced for weeks in the papers, and they were estimating there'd be half a million people there. So we went ahead, basically to keep our minds off what happened, I suppose. We had a photo of Brian on the stage and...it was exactly like he was there. There was a special atmosphere, and Mick said that poem. It was the most peaceful concert. And afterwards gangs of kids cleaned up, and we promised everyone who came back with a sack of litter a free album. It was just the complete opposite of Altamont

MUSICIAN: Well, it's an obligatory question, so let's deal with it. What does hindsight bring to mind about that horrible day?

WYMAN: Don't do free concerts in America. We'd had such a good tour, that we felt we'd make a gesture to the American people and do a concert for all the people that couldn't make the concerts and wanted to. It was a shame that that became the focal point of the entire tour, because if you ever talk about the '69 tour, all anybody ever remembers of it is not all the great shows we had for seven or eight weeks, it's the Altamont program. And even that's out of all proportion, because there were an estimated 400,000 people there and the trouble was all in the front. I would say 80 percent of the audience didn't even know anything; they weren't aware of it, except that we kept starting and stopping playing. But it was focused around forty people in a crowd of 400,000, so that was really out of proportion. It was just very unfortunate.

MUSICIAN: Why did it become such a media "execution?"

WYMAN: American kids can't just go and listen to music, can they? They have to get stoned. Or they have to get drunk. They can't just go and have fun.

MUSICIAN: Was it a disillusionment with arenas and stadiums that led to those club appearances in '76 at El Macombo in Toronto?

WYMAN: We wanted to do some live music, of a really different nature, in a club where we could get a really good atmosphere and a bit of audience reaction. Just basic blues stuff like we did in the early days on our live album. It was an idea that we'd had for some years, but we found it very uneconomical to tour America and play small places. In the old days, when you traveled in a van and you lived in tiny hotels two in a room, you could afford to do small clubs. But touring America and staying in suites at the Plaza, and having the best food and good wine and restaurants, means your expenses can reach $5,000,000—and you lose $100,000 or $200,000 each. But it's the only place in the world where you can actually make some money from touring: Europe you can't. England you can't. Australia's really hard, and...we *have* to make some money, especially Charlie and me, because we don't write songs. So the only money we physically earn is from record royalties which I can't complain about, but if you only do one record every two years, that cuts it down. It sounds very mercenary, but it's the facts of life. It's essential that we make some money on *some* tours, and as we only tour America every three years, it's difficult to do little clubs. But what we did in '78, was we split up. We did Philadelphia, J.F.K. Stadium with 110,000 people, then we came into New York and did the Palladium with 3,000. That worked on that tour, and we had a lot of fun jumping from big to little all the time.

MUSICIAN: About television, how did you feel about those yearly ritual appearances by the Stones on the *Ed Sullivan* Show?

WYMAN: Well, I think Ed Sullivan can be summed up really easily, do you remember when the Supremes came on his show and it came time for him to make the announcement? He said, "Ahnd Naow, ladies and gen'lmen, for your enjoyment, the...the...the..." and the curtains open and he says, "the *Girls*!" He had only one line to say every ten minutes, but he couldn't handle it. Every time we were on the show he had to do four retakes of whatever he was saying. "Heeeers the Rolling Stones with their new record...er...uh..."

MUSICIAN: Was it difficult to put up with the censorship at the time? I'm thinking of the trouble they gave you about "Satisfaction" and "Let's Spend the Night Together."

WYMAN: If it was England we probably wouldn't have bothered to go through with it. But the *Sullivan Show* was quite important at the time, reached 60 million people or so, and it was our only shot since you had to agree not to do another big show one month before or after being on it. So they wanted to beep out a word in "Satisfaction," and they just wound up making everything that much worse. We were miming to the record and Mick was singing live, and when he came to the line, "Trying to make some girl" they beeped it so it came out, "Trying to BEEP some girl," which made it so much worse because everybody's vivid imaginations were trying to figure out what he really said. I mean, it's still talked about now, right?

MUSICIAN: Was the TAMI show a pivotal experience?

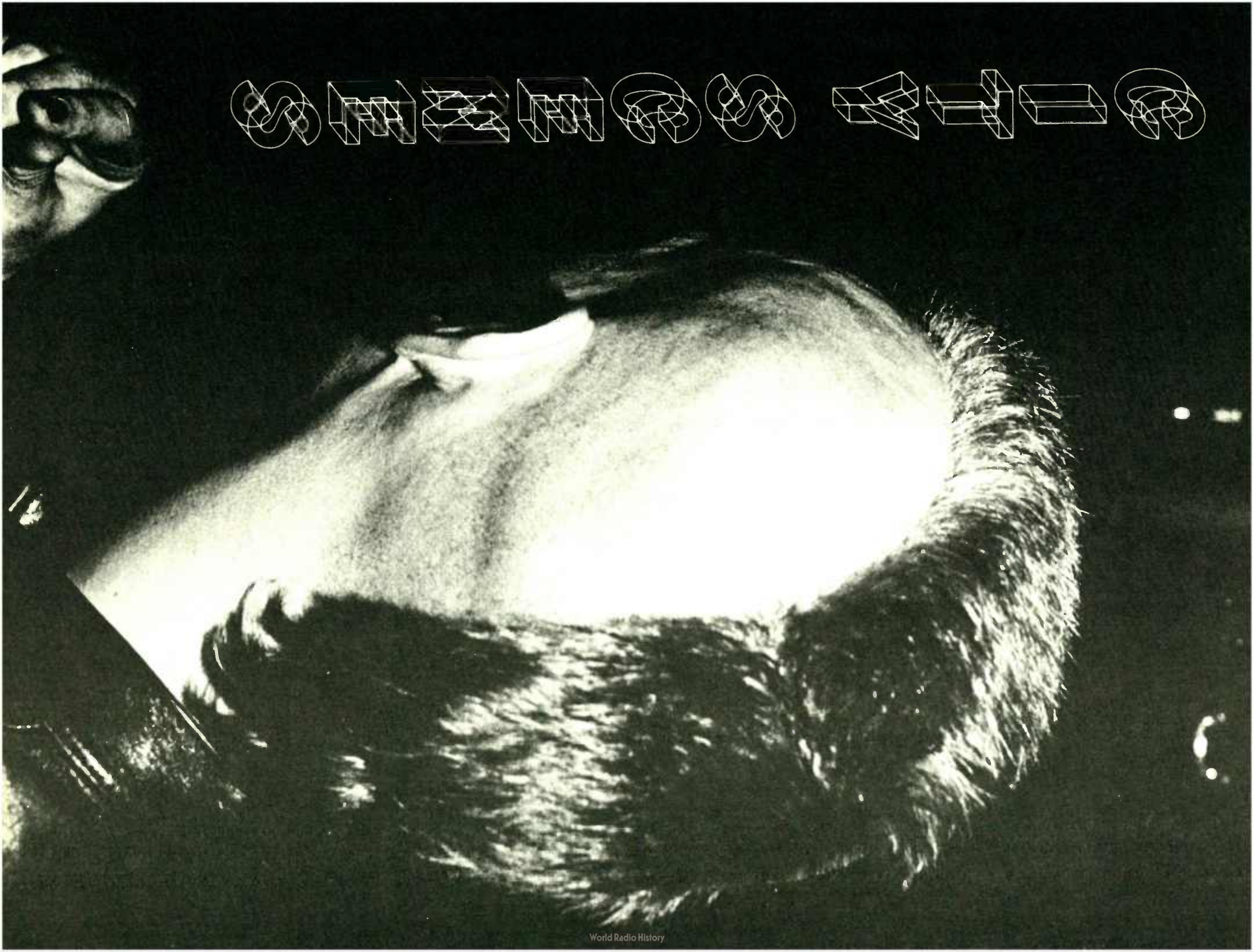
WYMAN: Yeah, there were an awful lot of black artists, which was great for us, but it wasn't the accepted thing at the time. We were hardly known in America at the time—we'd never had a big hit—and they put us on top of the bill in front of people like Chuck Berry, Marvin Gaye, the Supremes, James Brown, the Miracles...

MUSICIAN: Were you pleased about that?

WYMAN: No! We wanted James Brown to top it. Especially after we saw him. (Laughs) But they *insisted* that we top it, and before he went on James Brown came over to us and said, "I'm going to make you Rolling Stones wish that you'd never, ever come here to America!" Then he went on and did this *incredible* twenty-minute set and scared the shit out of us. We went out there and somehow or other it worked, everybody gave it everything they had—Keith and Mick were fantastic. They really tried. Then afterwards James Brown came over and congratulated us, and we were all mates after that. But anyway, that show captured, all in one shot, where music was at in '63-'64, and you can always go back and see those acts doing their hits and get an idea of how exciting it all was. Since then I don't think I've really seen anything comparable.

MUSICIAN: Can you get detached from your new albums after they're released?

WYMAN: I'm excited about them while we're working, but once they're out I'll probably just play it once or twice and that's it, because I've already heard it a hundred times or whatever. It's in the past. See, I can never buy a Stones album, put it on, and just listen and say, "Wow! That's good," or "That's bad," because before it even goes in the shops I know the whole thing by heart...It's like I've never seen a Rolling Stones concert, which might be a good kick one day...if they're still going in January '83, I might well do that!



NEW YORK

BY FRED SCHRUERS

What was it like going to rock 'n' roll shows in New York in 1981? Well, it was slightly nerve-wracking. Around what was left of the New Wave avant-garde, there was a persistent aura of death and desperation. The overdose death of George Scott, bass player for the Raybeats and others, was the sad capper to a few months of conspicuous communal wastedness—all the sadder because Scott had been so talented and so seemingly down-to-earth. The scene was fragmenting; James Chance's various combos, as well as the Lounge Lizards, represented the tip of an ersatz-jazz movement. James Blood Ulmer was the most notable presence in a striving for funk consciousness. Meanwhile, people like David Byrne and Eno were legitimizing—insisting upon—a kind of artsiness that was grafted cumbersomely on the skeleton of New Wave in performances at places like The Kitchen. At least the music didn't give itself over to fashion, in the manner of London's Blitz movement: despite a decent amount of club and radio play, acts like Spandau Ballet and Visage seemed more silly than compelling when they visited The Underground, a new club on the north side of Union Square. Adam and the Ants had a brief, Rollermania-type vogue, but destroyed most of their local good will when persons unknown tore up a long guest list of local liggers and tastemakers who ended up standing angrily in the street outside their late winter gig at the Ritz.

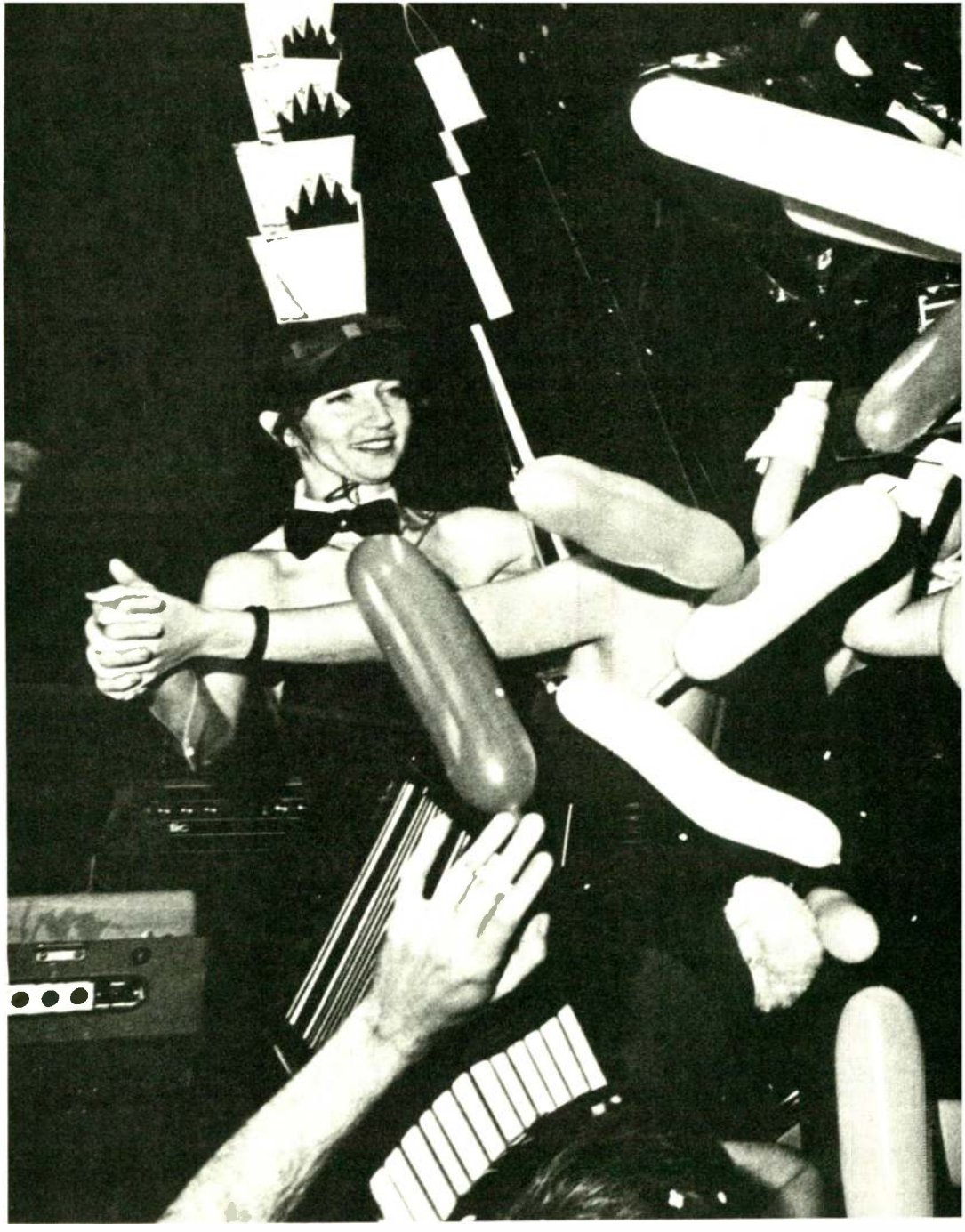
If one night could exemplify the Manhattan club scene this year for me, it would have to be Richard Hell's gig at the Peppermint Lounge. I had wanted to arrive for his 'early' show, around 2:30, but succumbed to a long 'nap', which left me decently refreshed but feeling pretty weird when I went sleepwalking into the streets at 3:30 AM. I stayed in a fog, drinking expensive Budweisers, during a rapaciously energetic set from a mostly-girl band called The Bloods (I think). During the break between acts I scrutinized the "Ant Music" video for perhaps the 100th time this year, peeked in on the absurdly psychedelicized 'VIP Room' and finally nestled in at the balcony rail—no vantage point in the room being more than 30 feet from the stage—with my fellow Richard Hell Fan Club members.

Hell was loose, even goofy, playing bass with a slightly altered Void-Oid lineup that still included two guitars. He did mostly new songs, so distortedly loud that the lyrics came only in snatches. "Let's take a little dip," he said before doing "Walking On the Water." To top off the loopy set, he brought on "Mr. Rhythm Machine—Johnny Thunders," who staggered almost all the way across the stage. wobbled perilously, then tottered back and started bucking around and whacking out licks with his eyes on Pluto. Hell's indulgent grins kept it all from being sad. Two punk legends, facing eclipse, jabbing bravely away. A cab driver, ending his shift at first light, gave me a free lift home.

HARVEY WANG

Pick up a *Village Voice* "Cafes-Clubs-Discos" section from last fall, and read off listings at random—you get an idea of how thriving the small club scene was, and what it's since come to: Lydia Lunch at The Rock Lounge (Howard Stein's experiment in downtown chic, since closed); "Pre-Vietnam Cabaret" at Club 57 on St. Marks Place (quiet lately); The Terrorists at The 80's on East 86th St. (closed); The Raybeats at Hurrah's (squeezed out of business this Spring, after leading the field, by The Ritz's higher guarantees to name bands); Gang of Four at Irving Plaza (still doing occasional inspired booking, such as the Slits); Quentin Crisp at s.n.a.f.u. (now recycling its usual stable of performers); Jim Carroll at Trax (a packed gig with Keith Richard guesting in guitar—and the last big deal at Trax for a long while); Sam & Dave at Tramps (still a class venue).

Other casualties included Jim Fouratt's Danceteria, as well as Heat, Maxwell's, Tier 3, The U.K. Club, One Under and most notably, Privates—closed down after protests from the local block association. Such hoary institutions as Max's (kept alive partly by the force of its own myth) and CBGB's (revitalized by owner Hilly Kristal's installation of sophisticated video and audio



recording gear) continued to sprinkle "name" New Wavers among showcases.

The mountainous presence in Manhattan was The Ritz, child of seasoned entrepreneur Jerry Brandt (who takes the place very personally and was sent to the hospital one night by a maddened patron he'd kicked out of the privileged seats). With an official capacity of about 1000, the club often seems to contain about double that, shoulder to shoulder in a sweating mass. This crowdedness can be felt as ambiance (as for Ry Cooder's fine, down-homey show and U2's bravura triumph) or simple discomfort. In any event, combined with brisk drink sales, it makes money. As the Ritz's guarantees insured them top bookings, places like Hurrah's faltered. Some people, particularly Fouratt, felt that the big-money influx was choking off not just clubs, but fledgling bands.

Jane Friedman, a veteran of the rock wars since early Stones tours and booker for Private's before its closing (she's been helping the management firm of Leber-Krebs scout for a large room/complex to replace it), disagrees: "Those bands can still get exposure opening for the headliners and if the smaller clubs will develop a mailing list, as the Mudd Club has, they can still get plenty of kids by word-of-mouth—even if the band that's appearing won't let them advertise the gig in the papers [due to the now-common contract clause that gives a place like the Ritz the "exclusive" local booking]."

Friedman does see a trend to larger venues, perhaps via converting of theatres—a trend kingpin promotor Ron Delsener (who opened the tony Savoy in mid-town) recognized by taking out the first 12 rows of seats in the Palladium in time for appearances by The Ramones and Black Uhuru. "Every band wants a dance ballroom 'cause that's where the kids want to go," says Friedman, "They want to get up close to the stage, maybe touch the performer . . . there are plenty of kids

HARVEY WANG

to go around. This city has room for two huge rooms and a Ritz."

One thing that has kept various clubs in the black is the common practice of selling tickets numbering well over the room's legal capacity. Bond's, the huge converted clothing store on Times Square, made a disastrous push for solvency and legitimacy by booking The Clash for a week. The band reportedly asked a large percentage of the bar receipts as well as ticket sales. The club meanwhile, paid for such niceties as $6,000 worth of promotional posters, a new stage (estimated at $14,000) and security (many more thousands). After it became known that the club was "sold out" to double or triple its legal capacity of 1000, city agencies busted the concert series, which ended up an artistic (bad sound, listless performances) and financial shambles. Club manager John Addison, returning shortly after the Clash dates from time spent in jail as a result of his involvement in the New York, New York disco, will try to revive Bond's.

Another prospective big venue is the Anderson Theatre, a Second Avenue antique slated to be reopened by Hank Laconti of the Agora Chain (Cleveland, Colombus, Atlanta, etc.). Friedman celebrates the growth: "Nobody saw the impact of rock 'n' roll in the Sixties until all those kids showed up at Woodstock. Suddenly, in our new music, there's a lot of kids. It's not like a few years ago, where you were a big success if you could fill CBGB's." Clubs in areas bordering the city—places like The Left Bank, The Malibu, My Father's Place—still get name acts in more intimate settings. In town, however, the numbers are up. The danger is that the same arena mentality that led "Clash fans" to boo their opener, Grandmaster Flash, will begin to prevail—and the New Wave's "good business" will turn into mob rule.

LOS ANGELES

BY CHRIS MORRIS

IF you're a moderately well-informed music lover who gets a fix on the rock 'n' roll world from such New York-based journals as *Rolling Stone, The Village Voice,* or *New York Rocker,* your impression of a typical night in a Los Angeles rock club may run something like this:

Up on the stage, a quartet of unschooled teenage players crank out a burst of overamped speed-laced pogoscreech; the lyrics are garbled and unintelligible, and no song lasts longer than a minute and a half. On the dance floor, a surly, drunken, unruly mob of leather-bedecked, mohawk-headed beach kids scramble, shamble, crunch, punch, and throttle their way across the floor in a slam-dancing frenzy. They pause occasionally to gang up on and punch out an outnumbered longhair or two, assault the stage and leap off of it, or scale a balcony and swan-dive head-first back into the crowd.

ANN SUMMA

Scenes like the one above do in fact occur in the L.A. clubs, but the rivers of ink expended on the new beach invasion by Caliphobic East Coast writers have resulted in nothing more than a sad, and sometimes willful, misrepresentation of the current state of Los Angeles rock.

The reporting on the recent surge of beach-punk violence in L.A. clubs has been infuriating on a number of counts. Some of the writing has been outright fabrication; the term "slamming," used to describe the body-contact dance style favored by the beach audience, was in fact concocted by a *Los Angeles Times* staffer (the kids themselves call their dancing the "HB [Huntington Beach] Strut"). Reporters have leaned heavily on the wild-youth aspects of the story, but to date not one writer has ventured out of West Hollywood to investigate the scene in the coastal towns to the south of the city that spawned the phenomenon. That tedious chore was left to filmmaker Penelope Spheeris, who included some striking interviews with punk fans in her documentary *The Decline . . . of western civilization.*

Rock 'n' roll hooliganism has been great copy since Bill Haley's heyday, and the beach punk scenario of bored suburbanites on a rampage does bear similarity to the situation outlined in the 1955 Nicholas Ray-James Dean opus *Rebel Without a Cause.* Punk rioting, now and always, makes good copy, but that's not all there is to Los Angeles rock today.

Los Angeles has a big, highly active club scene, with venues dotting the landscape from seaside Santa Monica to the East L.A. barrio. Local bands are well-represented on the national labels, but a number of small independents—Slash, Bomp, Rhino, Frontier, Voxx, Rollin' Rock, Happy Squid, and many others—have been quite aggressive in putting L.A. music in front of the public. A diversity of styles are reflected, both in live shows and on record.

It may come as a surprise, but the common denominator of the current crop of L.A. bands is their bedrock traditionalism. When the punk rebellion erupted in the city in 1977, it appeared to fly in the face of existing musical styles and conceptions, but latter-day Los Angeles rock has returned to the roots of modern American music. Even the survivors of the '77 revolution sound more conventional to '81 ears: check the brazen Doors cop in "Universal Corner" on X's second album *Wild Gift,* or dig the Alley Cats' live versions of "Under My Thumb" and "Jailhouse Rock."

L.A. rock of the non-punk variety falls into several readily identifiable categories, each one in the American grain:

POP. New wave pop remains the bread and butter of the local club circuit; the great challenge remains to find music of worth among the skinny-tied minions. The current cream of the local popsters includes the Zippers, a group from the '77 era who have refined their music into a brash synthesis of new wave and hard pop; the Plimsouls, a quartet led by the Nerves' Peter Case, who consciously draws on the leathery, melodic style of Australia's Easybeats for their inspiration; 20/20, Beatlesque melodists with a touch of Twilley (former

Twilley band member Phil Seymour, who can sing a catchy pop number with soulful vigor) who essay some interesting experiments on their new album *Look Out!*; old-timers the Pop, still winding out the hooks on a new Rhino EP; and the Motels, who scored hits last year with purring singles featuring vocalist Martha Davis. There are dozens of has-beens, also-rans and challengers in this area, from chart-topping charlatans the Knack to such new pretenders as Great Buildings and Gary Myrick and the Figures; almost to a man, they harken back to the golden era of 60s English and American pop for their sound.

BLUES/RHYTHM & BLUES/SOUL/ROCKABILLY There has been such a resurgence of interest in the blues in L.A. that some veteran black stars are stepping back into the spotlight: shouter Roy Brown is becoming a club fixture, and R&B bandleader Johnny Otis recently returned to the studio to cut his first album in years. A number of feisty roots bands are raising temperatures in local houses: the Blasters, a powerful quartet from Downey who cover every style from Billy Boy Arnold to Jimmie Rodgers and write the best originals this side of John Fogerty; the Falcons, a blue-eyed soul aggregation created by ex-members of the Quick; the Flesh Eaters, a temporary super-group starring participants from X and the Blasters that adapts Louisiana blues and rockabilly into a hellish post-punk matrix; Beach and the Beachnuts, a frat-soul goof outfit; the James Harman Band and the Hollywood Fats Band, trad Chicago blues units; Thee Precisions, old time R&B bashers featuring man-about-town Phast Phreddie Patterson; Top Jimmy and the Rhythm Pigs, spotlighting tough blues shouting; the Sheiks of Shake, who play abrasive Beefheart-style blues; and the Gun Club, in which Delta blues and Cajun rhythms meet punk head-on. The number of groups devoted to black and white blues of the 50s and 60s increases with each passing week.

SURF/GARAGE Some of the city's most entertaining bands successfully incorporate elements of these most devalued 60s rock styles. Jon and the Nightriders, an instrumental combo led by surf music scholar John Blair, has single-handedly rekindled a surf revival; in the Nightriders' wake, the Ventures have come out of retirement, and there is street chatter about the "psychotic surf music" of the Unknowns. Both the Last and the Unclaimed have picked up the garage band gauntlet, borrowing bits and pieces from the Mysterians and the Chocolate Watch Band for their nouveau-punkish music; the Last lie on the pop side of the spectrum, while the Unclaimed favor die-hard garage revivalism. Finally, there are the Go-Go's, a female quintet who include more than a dash of surf music in their punkified girl group sound (the Ventures' first post-retirement single is a version of the Go-Go's "Surfin' and Spyin'").

There is other less traditional music that pops up territorially: East L.A. Chicanopunk (the Plugz, the Brat, Thee Undertakers) and the new breed of Pasadena rock experimentalism (People, Human Hands, Monitor). There are some performers who resist easy classification altogether, like self-styled "Jewish Lesbian folksinger" Phranc.

Any way you want to look at it, the Los Angeles music scene is considerably busier, wider, and more old-fashioned, than the current national dispatches would lead one to believe. There's something besides Black Flag and the Circle Jerks happening in the L.A. clubs; it may be that nothing less than a real Cook's tour of the city's street scene can right the thus far uncorrected misimpressions forged by the music press.

Screamers punch it out with surfer punks at the Zuma Beach showers.

TORONTO

BY BART TESTA

Because it is home for major Canadian record companies (most are really branch plants for the Americans) and blessed with a sturdy live-music bar scene that is the envy of many larger American cities as well as a variety of fair small-hall venues, Toronto is unquestionably the capitol of the Canadian music scene. Although '81 was a dispiriting year in general, individual artists saw major gains and local activity showed promise for the future—at least as far as local fans were concerned. A city of cult followings, Toronto supports a little of everything. There is an active jazz circle, at home in The Music Gallery, Basin Street and several comfortable bars around town. A major folk festival, the descendent of Mariposa, still draws a large audience, many coming from rural Ontario to attend and sell crafts. New Wave and heavy metal also call Toronto home, countervailing trends whose fans never meet.

In the late 70s, Genesis, Supertramp, XTC and The Boomtown Rats found Toronto receptive long before the American audience caught on. While nothing on this scale happened in '81, new wave clubs like The Edge, The Cabana Room and The Horseshoe Tavern continued to provide warm welcomes to local and visiting bands ranging from John Cale, James White and The Lounge Lizards to John Martyn. In contrast, Maple Leaf Gardens saw few major concerts and the famous El Mocambo, where the Rolling Stones recorded a side of their 1979 live album was dark three or four nights a week. The established showcase club for major record companies, the El Mo's troubles were only one indicator of an industry reeling from declining record sales and slimming promotional budgets.

Tighter money also affected Toronto's onetime burgeoning new wave scene. Martha and the Muffins' international hit, "Echo Beach," a year ago prompted a raft of signings that promised lots of action. Last summer, a New Wave festival, headlined by the Talking Heads, was held on the rural outskirts of town. The event lost money and whatever interest it generated in the local scene proved short-lived. The 1981 season saw unheralded releases from the Diodes, Teenage Head and others vanish without a trace. Bob Segarini, onetime member of the mythic Wakers, has managed to make himself a fixture on the scene, even scoring a fair hit with "Goodbye, L.A." and landing a regular TV spot on the low budget station MCTV, which usually features Ukranian folk dancing, where Segarini drunkenly introduces record company videotapes.

The Muffins themselves released an album, *Trance and Dance,* intended to counteract their established reputation as an even-tempered pop band but the record's authentic rough edges drew scant support from fans and critics. Meanwhile, Michael Jordana, leader of the Poles, (in 1978, Toronto's most exciting punk band) reorganized her career and mounted a commercialized comeback. Supported by a flurry of posters showing her in tight black leather and plastic jewelry, Jordana released an execrable solo album and mounted a marginally successful tour as an anorexic sex object. Along similar lines, Carol Pope, stuck in the club with her band, Rough Trade, since the mid-70s, finally signed with CBS and hit big with *Avoid Freud,* propelled up the charts by "High School Confidential," a bit of kiddie porn eventually banned from local radio stations.

Toronto's rock radio, consisting chiefly of CHUM-FM and Q-107, was in its usual disarray, although the problem seems to have been less the programming, which was merely confused, than the on-air personnel, who were profoundly incompetent. Toronto TV actually does a bit better, particularly CITY-TV, the spunky local station whose New Music combines interviews and concert footage, and offers a few surprisingly ambitious documentaries. The results make the show Toronto's best rock magazine. Aside from Shades, a stubbornly durable and widely unread new wave monthly, Toronto has yet to support a lasting rock publication, perhaps because of the saturation coverage provided by the dailies, each of which feature two writers who regularly cover rock.

Without record contracts or significant exposure, Truth and Rights, The Time Twins and a few other local new wavish bands have managed to keep a comfortable vitality in the club scene. Toronto's substantial black population is predominantly Jamaican and their clubs feature lots of reggae but, working a largely white circuit, Truth and Rights became stars of Toronto reggae in 80-81. The Time Twins, fronted by two fashionable and talentless women, held cozy court with their wit and their band's jazz-tinged instrumental tact. Behind them, and carefully supported by the Twins (who suggest a far more cooperative spirit now prevails in the Toronto New Wave than had been the case), bands like Mama Quilla are warming up for next year. One group that has already surfaced with an album, *The*

Return of the Brocaded Adventurer, is Shox Johnson and his Jive Bombers, a sextet playing big-band jazz, R'n'B and early rock'n'roll to crowded clubs of hard-drinking college students.

In the big time heavy metal orbit, Rush conquered the world and became a sophisticated band in the order of the later Led Zeppelin. Always local champions, Rush are now the godfathers of Toronto rock but even their participation in the recording of Max Webster's *Juveniles* couldn't save Max from falling apart by mid-winter. Although they were the best Canadian band of the 70s and enormously popular in and around Toronto, Max could never seem to break elsewhere. Now, with Canadian bands like Loverboy, Streetheart and Saga zipping past them, Max's continuing failure on the heavy metal front required autodestruction. It's the Canadian rockers' code of honor.

Loverboy, Montreal's April Wine and the Calgary-based Streetheart are typical of the Canadian bands who made their first impact through AM radio. Unlike British and American heavy metal bands, Canadian groups in the genre can often gain airplay because of Canadian Content regulations. Riding on the hit, Loverboy toured themselves over the countryside until they could catch a ride south, which they did this year. Loverboy first won their base in Toronto, where the heavy metal style remained an article of faith even in the disco and new wave hypes and has always had its home on the Yonge Street strip that runs right down the middle of the downtown core. Even Goddo, mired on that street after five years of studio albums, managed to inch their way out this year with a live album. The parallel rise of Toronto, a Heart-like outfit with a female lead singer,

KIRK WEST/PHOTO RESERVE

indicates that heavy metal still held the mainstream. The big news in 80-81 for Toronto bands was that local heavy metal groups stayed around and so were ready, able and willing to cash in now that the style is enjoying a big revival.

Art rockers, too, similarly found new reasons to feel their faith in British models was not misplaced. A few years ago, Saga was formed out of broken parts from some early 70s bar bands on a Yes-Genesis blueprint. Still little known in the U.S., Saga broke last year in Germany, followed up with tours of Western Europe and Canada, and are now riding high on their third album, *Silent Night.* More eccentric and mysterious than Saga is Nash the Slash, a tremendous success in England and a favorite in Toronto where, however, he now performs infrequently. No one officially knows who Nash is (another ex-Toronto performer masked with a pseudonym is Leon Redbone), but he started out as a leader in a short-lived electronic experimental scene from the early '70s.

After two years doing good *samidzadt* rock in the new wave clubs, B.B. Gabor, an Eastern European immigrant to Canada, came under Rush's management and his career slipped into second gear with "Nyet, Nyet, Soviet." There are some questions, though, about where Gabor can go from here. Meanwhile, Lisa del Bello, reemerged after two years of retirement so she could finish high school with a new album, *Drastic Measures.*

Considered a long-term best-bet, del Bello is a beautiful young woman with a very powerful voice and the good sense to stay between rock and pop while she figures out exactly which way to jump. But she has yet to find a much needed collaborator and her self-penned songs seriously lack finish.

While the new wave is in partial recession and the heavy metal hordes are going great guns in Toronto, folkies of various shades continue as the staple musicians of the over-25 crowd. Besides the festival, and regular concerts by Kate and Anna McGarrigle, Leo Kottke and John Fahey, the bar scene supports durable homespun singers like Luke Gibson who tend to fade into country rock and straight country, both of which share club space with folk and pop on the circuit. Gordon Lightfoot didn't record this year, but his drunken driving charges and Massey Hall concerts remained honored Toronto institutions.

After a decade as a star in Canada, Bruce Cockburn finally returned to Toronto from his retreat in rural Ontario and recorded *Humans,* an international breakthrough album for him. Touring Japan and Europe, with frequent probes into the states, Cockburn is now poised for a try as an important international songwriter. The main factor in his rise is the transformation from Christian folkie to rhythm-based singer fronting a drum-heavy band. Begun cautiously on *Further Adventures of . . .*, the process comes to a brave finish with a new electric album, *Inner City Front,* to kick off the new season.

Meanwhile, Dan Hill, who ruled the teen romance airwaves for several years with his syrupy songs, neither recorded nor performed and is reportedly tied up in law suits against his management, Finklestein-Fiedler, who also manage Cockburn.

ATLANTA

BY TONY PARIS

Atlanta has always seen itself as the urban center, or rather, cultural hub, of the South. It's a term that has both glorified and stigmatized the city at the same time. Yet its growth in 1981 has been healthy, especially where music is concerned. A new music scene gained credence as many of the groups from Atlanta gained national success, where before, only a handful of musicians could claim to be a part of the Atlanta music scene. While city planners and old line music industry figures like music publisher Bill Lowery of The Lowery Group talked of Atlanta one day becoming "the next big music city"; local musicians, club owners and enterprising people who saw independent record labels as a solution to the musical void in Atlanta took action. As the cliche goes, actions speak louder than words, and it held true for Atlanta in 1981.

The high-grossing concerts at The Omni, Atlanta's 16,000 seat plus sports arena, were very few this year. The high production costs, coupled with the rough economy, made it prohibitive for promoters to take the chance of selling The Omni. The big names did make it through—Linda Ronstadt, The Cars, Kenny Rogers, The Doobie Brothers and Stevie Wonder. New Year's Eve marked a celebration with The Rossington Collins Band's show broadcast across the country. Styx and REO Speedwagon followed, and then Bruce Springsteen. The Boss had everyone dancing in the aisles, not unlike a high school sock hop. But if Springsteen reverted everyone back to the carefree '50s, the appearance later in the year by The Jacksons at a benefit for the Atlanta Children's Fund brought everyone back to the reality of the '80s. Even though the alleged killer of Atlanta's 27 so-called "missing and murdered" black children had been jailed between the time of the show being announced and the date of performance, the show went on, unifying the audience in its hopes for the safety of Atlanta's young. This benefit concert was the only major public show of concern for the Atlanta tragedy by the music world, television public service announcements by Atlanta resident Isaac Hayes and the dedication of a few songs notwithstanding.

The real moment of truth for bands playing the Atlanta market, however, is the 3900-seat Fox Theatre, a Depression-era movie palace of Moorish and Egyptian architecture. It proved valuable this year in establishing the viability of many relatively new bands while showing the decline in stature of others. Most notable in the latter category was the two-night stint by the Allman Brothers Band, headliners of numerous Omni and stadium shows as well as primary exponents of '70s Southern music. Neither Allman show sold out. The shows were parodies of the strong Allman shows of the past which had made the band adopted hometown heroes.

Elvis Costello and The Police, both in their first local appearances outside of an Atlanta club, sold out the Fox, proving Atlantans to have a much wider musical taste than area radio programmers would allow, judging by the airplay these two acts received in the city. Though not selling out, Pat Travers, .38 Special, April Wine, Judas Priest and Blackfoot showed their drawing power at the Fox, insuring their return to the hall.

The clubs, however, were the answer to what was going on musically in Atlanta. The Atlanta Agora, part of the Ohio-based chain, continued in its third year while 688 celebrated its first anniversary.

At a capacity just over 1300, the Agora is the showcase club for national acts signed to major labels on tour supporting the new album. The list of performers is an obvious one: Dire Straits; Pat Benatar; Steve Forbert; Thin Lizzy; Johnny Van Zant, who immediately went to opening for quite a few acts at the Fox; Jack Bruce; The Romantics, with Cheap Trick jamming; Prince; Humble Pie; etc. Not being able to hold the crowds every night, the club began staging "air-guitar" contests in which participants pretended to play guitar to heavy metal songs. A favorite was a 200 pound male with overalls and a fireman's hat aping Hendrix's "Purple Haze."

688, named so for its address, was modelled after numerous New York rock discos. The club's opening was met with skepticism by many, but the year proved it to be quite successful. Their roster was more focused, dealing primarily with new bands with records out on independent labels around the country and abroad: The Rockats, Human Sexual Response, Brian Brain, The Lounge Lizards, DNA and others. They also scored the bands deemed a "cult status risk" by the Agora, though signed to a major label: Jim Carroll, The Plastics, The Psychedelic Furs and The Gang Of Four.

But the importance of 688 was in giving the creative, experimental new bands in Atlanta a room to play, a chance to make good money rather than a case of beer, and the exposure to develop followings large enough to fill the 500-plus capacity club. Such was the case with Pylon, The Method Actors, The Swimming Pool Q's,

The Basics, The Heathen Girls and Kevin Dunn and The Regiment Of Women.

Atlanta has always been a town divided between the "established" bands like the Atlanta Rhythm Section, Mother's Finest and Kansas, and those bands continuously playing the bar circuit. Yet by 1981, due largely to three groups, The Fans, The Brains and The B-52's, that all changed.

The Fans, whose catchphrase at their incept in 1975 was "Pop music for the 1980's," broke up in September 1980. But their five years were not in vain. They were the first to step out of the stereotypical southern band mode and play a new, urban music. After them came The B-52's, The Brains and The Producers, who succeeded on a national level, giving credibility to the Atlanta scene. The success of The B-52's and The Brains, who took more chances in their music than The Producers, gave many musicians a glimpse of hope in their own bands succeeding, while others were intimidated by the possibilities.

The emergence of independent record labels afforded local musicians the chance to record their own lp's now rather than to wait to never be signed by major labels. The three most prominent were DB Recs, Landslide and Snow Star.

DB Recs' 1978 release, "Rock Lobster," by The B-52's was instrumental in that group's being signed to Warner Brothers Records. This year the label released three albums by area bands: Pylon's minimalistic *Gyrate; The Deep End,* with its neo-southern psychedelia by The Swimming Pool Q's; and *The Judgement Of Paris,* an electronic work of art, by Kevin Dunn and The Regiment Of Women. DB owner Danny Beard kept production costs low by having the bands record in a well-equipped, though inexpensive, mass media studio used by various religious organizations. As well, Kevin Dunn assisted in production of the label's releases. Another factor in cutting production costs was DB's aligning itself with the English label Armageddon, making arrangements to split the costs of albums and singles they chose to release in their respective countries.

The formation of Landslide Records by Michael Rothschild brought to vinyl a different side of Atlanta music, one of more contemporary jazz. The featured artists were Atlantans, but the label by no means restricted itself to local musicians. Landslide's first release, *Outside Looking Out,* by The Late Bronze Age featuring Hampton B. Coles (Ret.) and Ben "Pops" Thornton, listed in its credits Yazam Parvanta, an Afghanistanian tabla player who left his country when the Russians invaded, David Earle Johnson and Paul McCandless. The credits were also filled with fictitious names and instruments (Col. Crawford Boyd—potarth and bawa) but most interesting was the fact that Hampton B. Coles (Ret.) was a pseudonym for Bruce Hampton, leader of the now-legendary Hampton Grease Band. *Outside Looking Out* was Hampton's first serious musical effort in years and showed him in fine form.

Other releases on Landslide included Dan Wall's *Song For The Night* featuring Steve Grossman, Mike Richmond and Jimmy Madison and *Route Two* by David Earle Johnson with John Abercrombie, Jeremy Steig, Gary Campbell and Joe Chambers. Both were recorded

in New York rather than Atlanta due to the availability of the musicians.

The third, Snow Star, is owned by the artist himself, Glenn Phillips. Phillips, too, was a member of the Hampton Grease Band, but where Hampton has opted for a more avant-garde realm of music, Phillips has attacked instrumental rock on his *Dark Lights* lp with such intense guitar-hero pyrotechnics that many other guitarists are left pale in comparison.

While these three labels were formed by people sympathetic to the creative needs of their artists, as well as understanding of Britain's independent label explosion at the end of the '70s, there were new Atlanta-based labels formed in the image of the major label conglomerates. Such was the case with Equity Recording Co. Inc. and its two labels, Robox and Tanglewood. Robox, the pop line, released lp's by newcomers Ziggurat and two acts whose time most considered to have come and gone, Dennis (Classics IV) Yost and Grinderswitch. Its sister label, Tanglewood, released a number of singles by country artists.

In the same vein, but on a much larger scale, Atlanta lawyer Joel Katz formed Kat Family Records early in the year with distribution through CBS Records. Though based in Atlanta, the label ignored most local talent except for two performers who had enjoyed success in the past, William Bell and Billy Joe Royal. The label also gambled with British Doo Wop eccentrics The Darts. None of the releases made any great impact.

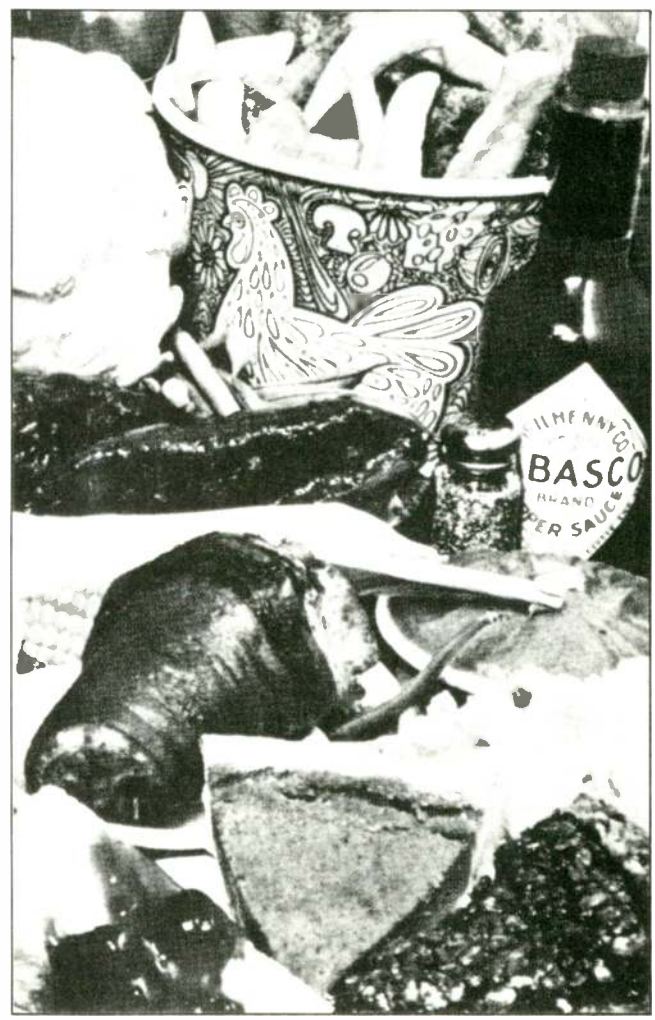
Other albums released included two Atlanta sampler albums. One, *Standardeviation,* compiled by Bill Mohr, was a collection of songs by six bands popular in the new music mode: Atlanta's black leather and chains band, The Restraints, The Swimming Pool Q's, Operator, The Basics, No Exit and the electronic outfit Kaos. The album was met with mixed reactions due to its production quality and Mohr's choice of bands.

On the other hand, *Homecookin',* an lp assembled under the guidance of the distastefully commercial WKLS-FM/96 Rock was a huge success, selling upward of 15,000 units in the city, though none of the acts were representative of what was happening musically in Atlanta. Songs were chosen by a panel of judges who auditioned tapes mailed in from around the southeast with styles chosen to fit various musical genres—rock, folk, country. Though most bands to make it on the record had never played in town, the record sold with proceeds donated to the Georgia Special Olympics Fund, due to the guaranteed airplay by 96 Rock.

As for the airwaves, FM radio plodded along thanks to the sterile insult to radio listener's intelligence by the aforementioned WKLS. Playing a superstar format provided by the consulting firm of Burkhart, Abrams, Michaels and Douglas, the station held fast the 18 to 24 year old male audience with its continuous Led Zeppelin and Yes selections interspliced with other more up-to-date heavy rockers. At the other end of the spectrum, WQXI-FM/94-Q, kept the young adult market with its FM Top 40 programming.

The only two stations to give airplay to local and or new music were the two college-run stations, WRAS and WREK. Over at WRAS, the Georgia State University station, a Top 40 format was maintained, though with a more open policy of exposing new music, due in part to the success of disc jockey Mark Williams' weekly "Pure Mania" show which ran the gamut from new wave to reggae to avant-garde.

Over at the Georgia Institute of Technology's WREK, things were a little different. The air time is 90% programmed by computers with banks of pre-recorded tape that alternate from bluegrass to rock to classical to folk to jazz continuously. With such a varied format, local and new music was programmed into the computers, blending into the myriad of music already being broadcast to a city finally growing with its musical aspirations.



SAN FRANCISCO

BY DAN FORTE

It's rather distressing to realize that the community that spawned flower power, be-ins, and acid rock has come up with nothing of musical significance since. It's as though the entire San Francisco Bay Area went into hibernation circa 1969 and has slept through the Seventies and early Eighties. Let's hope someone left a wake-up call for 1982.

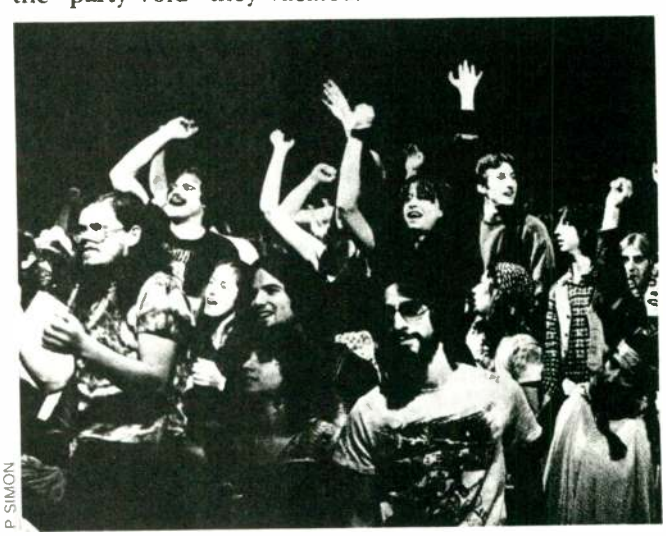
The stagnant state of the San Francisco music scene is mirrored by what's available on the local airwaves. After betraying completely its position as the granddaddy of underground radio, KSAN was bought out by one of the country music franchises. While it is still thankfully one of the least commercial stations in the nation, the South Bay's KFAT isn't nearly as daring as it once was. Alameda's tiny KJAZ remains perhaps the last bastion for the true jazz buff. KMEL, KOME, KSJO—the rock contingent—might just as well be in any metropolitan area. They have about as much to do with San Francisco as do so-called Bay Area rock stars such as Boz Scaggs, the Doobie Brothers, Eddie Money, Sammy Hagar, and Journey. The only thing S.F. about them is their zip code.

The few major rock acts that *are* decidedly San Francisco are also inextricably locked in the days of Haight-Ashbury and free concerts in the Panhandle. The Grateful Dead will probably never change, Jefferson Starship has (for the worse), and Santana seems to have lost the energy that made it the most original, most vital band in the City.

A couple of years ago, promoter Chet Helms, founder of the Family Dog, held a Tribal Stomp reunion at U.C. Berkeley's Greek Theatre, consisting of a near who's who of former Fillmore and Avalon Ballroom regulars. It's A Beautiful Day, Country Joe & the Fish, Canned Heat, Dan Hicks, Lee Michaels, even the original Butterfield Blues Band dusted off old favorites like "White Bird," "Section 43," and "Born in Chicago." Not surprisingly, most of these psychedelic relics, who'd long since traded in their amps for briefcases and day gigs, sounded pretty dreadful. The one band, however, that retained the spirit of the Summer of Love was Big Brother & the Holding Company, even without the late Janis Joplin. Big Brother was comprised of notoriously bad musicians even when they were backing rock & roll's preeminent blues shouter, and here they were, ten years later, playing as sloppily as ever. But there was a spirit there—of adventure, of experimentation, of spontaneity—that the new, blown-dry groups have no conception of.

Even the City's new wave scene seems comparatively tame—not as outrageous as New York's, not as commercial as Los Angeles', and obviously not as political or as intense as Britain's. There is a certain sense of humor to San Francisco's punks, but more care seems to be taken in choosing a band's name—some of the more interesting: Eye Protection, Chrome Dinette, Fried Abortions, the Golden Gate Jumpers, and the Dead Kennedys (whose lead singer, Jello Biafra, lost in his valiant bid to unseat mayor Diane Feinstein)—than in creating 45 minutes worth of original rock & roll.

New wave clubs abound—Mabuhay Gardens, Berkeley Square, Le Disque, the Palms, the I-Beam, Sound of Music—but the so-called rock palaces, such as the Keystones and Old Waldorf (owned by Bill Graham) are reticent to book new bands unless they've already proven themselves in the numbers game, on vinyl. The one band that had the potential to perhaps bridge the gap between the new wave cult audience and danceable mainstream rock, No Sisters, have opted for a more "serious" sound lately, and no band has filled the "party void" they vacated.



P SIMON

Although it's too safe to even be called a prediction, 1982 should undoubtedly be the year that Greg Kihn's brand of not-quite-new-wave pop catches on nationwide and makes him a full-fledged headliner. It may take longer for the Rubinoos' pop-harmonies-over-chainsaw-guitar to do likewise, but that would seem inevitable as well, since probably the hardest com-

modity to come by in a rock band is a really good vocalist, which the Rubinoos have in abundance.

If an East Bay native may be permitted a little more hometown favoritism, for my money there is more happening on a night-to-night level in Oakland and Berkeley than in the more famous "City By The Bay." If you want to go see L.A.'s latest signing breaking in their road show before going home to the Roxy, then pay the bridge toll and drive to San Francisco. But if it's Thursday night and you're just looking for a good time (and aren't concerned with whose record is where on the *Cashbox* charts) I say stay in the East Bay—whether your tastes lean toward new wave (the Berkeley Square, soon to be enlarged), folk (Berkeley's Freight & Salvage, the last of the coffee houses), salsa (definitely the East Bay's domain, home of the Escoveda family), or R&B (check out the house band at Larry Blake's Rathskellar near the U.C. campus).

While S.F.'s days as a mecca for jazz musicians are long since past, the City still boasts two of the finest clubs in the country, Todd Barkham's Keystone Korner and Tom Bradshaw's Great American Music Hall. Keystone Korner (not to be confused with the rock chain, Keystone Berkeley, Keystone Palo Alto, and The Stone) is a bit more atmospheric perhaps and more predisposed to the avant-garde and loose jam sessions—more hardcore, if you will—while the lavish Music Hall is a bit more "refined" and offers a more eclectic booking policy (everyone from Sonny Rollins to Bill Monroe).

Marin County, being the domicile of mandolinist David Grisman, could therefore be called the home of Dawg music, that spirited hybrid of bluegrass and swing. Trimming their ranks to the David Grisman Quartet, the DGQ sounds more solid than ever. Featuring as it does the "Dawg" himself, the Grisman Quartet far outdistances any of its followers in the genre, although mandolinists by the score seemed to have come out of the woodwork when Grisman became popular. Two bands capable of crowding into the

David Grisman and the family of Dawg.

spotlight are mandolinst Tim Ware's hypnotic group and former DGQ guitarist Tony Rice's newly-formed quartet, the Tony Rice Unit.

The one contingent that seems most alive and definitely kicking is the blues community, oddly enough. With Charlie Musselwhite, John Lee Hooker, and Mark Naftalin having made the Bay Area their home for a decade or so now, and with local bar stars Ron Thompson, the Houserockers, and the Blues Survivors earning more than passing grades under their tutelage, the Bay Area features more blues activity than any metropolitan area outside of Chicago.

Each summer the San Francisco Blues Festival showcases the Bay Area's (and West Coast's) wares, and recently formed is the South Bay Blues Society, which promises more forums for the local blues bands.

Elvin Bishop, known to radio programmers as "Southern boogie," can be found fairly regularly around neighborhood beer joints playing nothin' but the blues. Ironically, Bishop is currently without a record deal, although he boasts the best band of R&B veterans he's ever fronted.

Sadly, 1981 will be remembered as the year one of San Francisco's greatest blues *and* rock stars, Michael Bloomfield, passed away. Though he first made his mark in Chicago (with Paul Butterfield) and New York (with Bob Dylan), it was in Marin County that Bloomfield chose to set up camp for Electric Flag and his subsequent projects. One of the most influential figures on rock guitar in the Sixties, America's counterpart to Eric Clapton, Bloomfield kept a low profile in recent years, preferring to play acoustic blues more than high-volume rock. But those close to him said he seemed rejuvenated just prior to his death; "He was alive with ideas," according to Stefan Grossman. Mike Bloomfield called the Bay Area his home, just as the San Francisco music community called him their resident blues guitarist. He will be forever remembered and sorely missed.

AUSTIN, TEXAS

BY LESTER BANGS

Inasmuch as the media have apparently decided on Texas and particularly Austin as the next locale to plunder, this article probably makes me as culpable as anybody else, so there's a little liberal guilt to put you off in front. On the other hand, this town has almost forty clubs featuring live music, which makes it the highest per capita in the country, and so much of that music (by both people who've recorded and those who have not) so fine that you oughta know about it.

There's been the emergence of a whole new breed of young West Texas singers and instrumentalists in the past few years with more interesting connections to the musical gene-pool the Outlaws draw on: people like Joe Ely, Butch Hancock and Jimmie Gilmore write and sing a more honest, soulful and unaffected country music that reaches back with equal sureness to Buddy Holly (Ely, Hancock) and Hank Williams (Gilmore's voice, at its best, recalls Williams' plaintive high tenor). Ely is the best known of them so far, and like Holly both he and Hancock come from Lubbock, Texas, where word has it they were a couple of the town's original peyote-chawing hipsters. Certainly Ely's songs have a pure yearning running through them reflective of whole lives lived in small rural towns where everybody knows everybody for generations back. I guess it's not surprising that artists like this don't tour all that often, though Ely has recently been helped out in terms of garnering a wider international audience by the Clash. You can see Ely and, more often, Hancock in Austin at the Alamo Hotel Lounge at Sixth and Guadeloup, said hotel being spiritually and service-wise the Chelsea of Austin (LBJ's brother, Sam Houston Johnson, drank himself to death in one of the rooms). The lounge off the lobby has wound up legendary as one of the best places in any state to come hear usually pretty fine folk-to-country singer-songwriter style music in a casual and authentic setting (as opposed to the glitz of a Gilley's, though I guess C&W glitz is usually authentic in terms of the form.

It's really hard to single out specific places, though, because as previously stated Austin currently has about as vital a music scene as you're liable to find anywhere, with clubs all over the city where on a decent to average night you can catch everything from headbanging punk to mainstream jazz to C&W/folk to both black and white blues bands to the spaced-out polkas of Mexican border *conjunto* music. And it's a tradition going back a while: there's a place called Duke's on Congress Ave. that's now one of the two major New Wave venues in town; in the Sixties it was the Vulcan Gas Works, where the Thirteenth Floor Elevators and other *creme* of Texas psychedelia played, and both Johnny Winter's first album and the Velvet Underground's *Live '69* set were recorded. An even greater legend is the Armadillo World Headquarters on Barton Springs Road, which opened in August 1970 and closed on January 1, 1981, making it for a solid decade one of the best places to go see name rock 'n' roll acts in the country. A lot of people credit the Armadillo with opening up Austin as a national music scene in the first place, and even though, as one friend put it, to go there now is to feel as if you're walking through the "rubble" of bygone glories, the ghosts *are* palpable, especially since so many of them have left their greetings on walls of the dressing rooms and backstage area in the form of incredibly elaborate and/or outrageous graffiti and works of multicolored magic marker art. (Last real biggie was the Clash, who painted a giant armadillo on the wall when they were here.) There are large open spaces for shows as well as complete bars, both inside and out.

There is a thriving rhythm and blues scene here—largely white, and lemme tell you it's not like going to hear this stuff at the Village Gate. Standout bands include Double Trouble, the Headhunters and (hottest, and the only one so far with LPs out nationally) the Fabulous Thunderbirds. I caught the T-Birds at a club called Soap Creek, where you could pretty much see the steam in the air as Texas boys and girls hopped themselves high on longneck beers and indulged in furiously intense slow crotch grinds while the T-Birds stood onstage and ground out their own pelvic imperative in one of the rawest sets of white blues playing I've ever witnessed.

There's also the whole *conjunto/norteno* cultural crosspollination Mexican border polkas scene, which has already begun to inspire lots of musicians outside its parameters (cf. Joe "King" Carrasco). Basically it might be capsulized as Mariachi polkas with a sort of reggae consciousness, at least insofar as the songs assume a spacy, probably chemically-related but also tropic feel of drifting across Baja California and West Texas highways in your car on a hot afternoon with pretty much worthless fields stretching infinitely on both sides of you and nowhere at all to go but loving it

EBET ROBERTS

Joe Ely sweatin' in Austin.

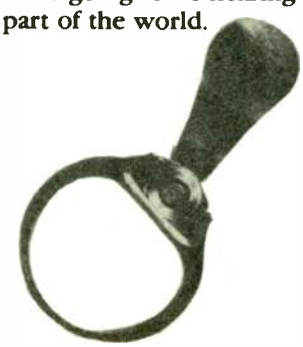
with an open beer in your hand and this music on the radio as rank winds sweep in off the Gulf. The three main figures to emerge from local Mexican music are Little Joe, Johnny, y la Familia (that's the name of one band), Little Joe having styled himself as something of a "Godfather" to that particular scene in the area; Flaco Jimenez, who is keeping the roots of Tex-Mex music alive, a genre almost singlehandedly invented by his father Santiago Jimenez; and sometime *enfant terrible* (now becoming more established though not more assimilated—he still plays for migrant laborers for instance) Esteban (Steve) Jordan, who more than once has been called "the Jimi Hendrix of the accordian."

Which also goes for a guy by the name of Dan Del Santo, the single most impressive "new" talent I've seen anywhere in quite some time. Fronting a fairly large band featuring horns, percussion, the works, he is a visually unprepossessing man who stands there motionless in casual sportsuit with hat pulled down over one eye, singing powerful original songs about universal human pain and immutable aloneness, apartness, fear and loss in the most unique style I've heard in quite a while, a misleadingly velvety whisper that's capable of nigh-pathological depression. This vocal understatement contrasts startlingly with the brutal tones he wrenches from his Stratocaster, and his music overall seems to draw on an absorbingly original fusion of R&B, rock, jazz and reggae, with his whole band superlative on a Van Morrison level.

There is one turnoff about the Austin scene: it's very ghettoized. Which only makes sense, I suppose, when you reflect how many different communities coexist here: college (frats vs. punks), hippie (vs. frats and punks), and deeply entrenched white and black and Mexican communities with the more or less traditional values of most any nontransient population. Said ghettoization is perhaps most evident on the punk scene, which seems largely still unaware of the possibility that black musical forms could have anything to do with New Wave music. "I been hearing that blues shit all my life," said Gary of Raul's when my band auditioned there. "I like modern music." And Raul's, a rather uptight little place with paintings of giant rats along one inner wall and graffiti about local bands all over the outside, serves a function roughly analagous to early C.B.G.B.'s as being the locus of Austin punk/New Wave hap'nin's. Personally I prefer the more congenial Duke's, but Raul's is the place where Elvis Costello and Patti Smith played and where punks can be found pogoing most any night of the week to the bands which are the club's staple, 1977 Xerox Ramones-clones with names like the Dicks, the Big Boys, Sharon Tate's Baby and the Inserts. Fortunately, there are a number of more original bands around. Joe "King" Carrasco you have probably heard of by now; his combination of "Wooly Bully"/"96 Tears" Tex-Mex with New Wave vitality recently won him a contract with Stiff. Standing Waves will probably be the next to follow him into (inter)national prominence—they've been compared to Talking Heads, which is more a reflection of most people's inability to receive something new and different on its own terms than anything else. Also prominent are the Gator Family, starring local movieola diva Sally Norvell, who, over what's probably the most brutal powerchording in town, delivers both vocally and visually onstage, managing to remind you simultaneously of Debbie Harry, Janis Joplin, the best of Grace Slick and the worst of Patti Smith while retaining something distinctly her own. F-Systems are another hot local band with a female lead singer, with a style of their own emerging in staccato attack of guitars and synthesizer; I thought their lyrics most suited my own Manhattanite-style anomic hostility till I found out they are all based on old B horror flicks' plots. Oh well. The Re. Cords, who are probably the most popular local band yet to play nationally, have just released their first album, an infectiously fun collection of songs about things like teen orgies and going in debt on Master Charge. Almost the first New Wave goodtime band, they've also distinguished themselves by trooping around places like Austin's State Capitol building, getting on the Six O'Clock News playing something they call "Acoustic Folk Punk." Inasmuch as there is no local band nihilistic enough for my aforementioned anomic propensities, I settle for listening to Radio Free Europe, who became instant legend when their debut set at Raul's playing for a packed house managed to clear the room in under twenty minutes.

Also interesting are a couple of local bands specializing in generic linkups. The Delinquents are a sort of New Wave surf band whose single, "Alien Beach Party," was selected by England's *New Musical Express* as Single of the Week when it was first released. Finally, there is Brave Combo, who are truly wonderful both live and on their recently-released EP. They've already played New York several times and I predict will be either the next hot breakout from this region after Standing Waves or forced to shuffle home in ignominy 'cause nobody anywhere wants 'em 'cause they play *punk polkas*, no kidding, and damn good too. Most people probably think they're too hip for polkas, but you sure can bounce your booty to those suckers. "Pushing Too Hard" polka? C'mon, you can't deny it, it's great.

I should stress that this is of necessity no more than snapshots of one of the richest music scenes I've ever encountered. I'm not sure exactly why it is that Austin, rather than New York or L.A. or San Fran or London seems to shaping up as the most fertile spawning ground of popular music in the dawn of the Eighties. Maybe it has something to do with the legendarily laidback lifestyle, which initially seduced me and finally drove me back to New York. All I know, is that in the months ahead, you're going to be hearing a lot of great music from this part of the world.



SEATTLE

BY GEORGE ARTHUR

Pacific Northwest music partisans are inclined to a powerful regional chauvinism. As they express it, the area's substantial role in American pop and rock is most often overlooked. Seattle's own Jimi Hendrix, in this perspective, is merely the most towering of individual contributions in a long history of musical ferment.

In rock and roll, aside from the overwhelming Hendrix, the most revered heritage is the moment in Pacific Northwest rock forever crystalized in the Kingsmen's "Louie, Louie," 2:41 minutes of chaotic immortality.

During an era nationally dominated by the cheesy and the diluted, acts like the Wailers, the Sonics, Dynamics, Viceroys, Rockin' Robin Roberts and Gail Harris (spiritual prototype for the B-52's) created an explosive white, teen-age take on rhythm and blues. An era and scene which produced both Paul Revere and The Raiders *and* Larry Coryell has got to be recalled as fertile.

Two and three years ago, all of this was very much on the minds of Pacific Northwest fans and musicians. After years during which the local circuit had languished—dominated by Top 40 cover bands and related clones—the area's multiple music scenes took off in a dozen different directions.

Where once only Jr. Cadillac, a Seattle band which includes veterans of the '60s rock explosion, kept faith with anything but current radio playlists, scores of bands sprang up which in inventiveness, stage charisma and energy could rightfully claim Pacific Northwest rock and roll as heritage and evolution.

Against the backdrop of the international success of the Seattle-based Heart, an indigenous scene re-emerged. Spawning all manner of acts, a dozen new or renewed venues and a wave of independent recording efforts, the area's music seemed pregnant with opportunity. In bars, taverns and rented halls, the Pacific Northwest was reinventing its rock and roll roots.

The atmosphere was nothing less than heady. Like the spring night in 1979 when Stevie Wonder jammed with local soul funk unit Epicenter at the Aquarius Tavern (now called Parkers). The band's powerhouse vocalist Bernadette Bascom harmonized with the black pop master, and Epicenter soon made its way to L.A.'s studios under Wonder's sponsorship.

As part of the national concert circuit, Seattle probably drew a greater variety and volume of touring acts than any U.S. city of comparable size. Sharp competition among several promoters led to an embarrassment of performance riches. The first Seattle appearances by Robert Palmer, Elvis Costello, Patti Smith and the band Blondie carried ticket prices of $1 and $2; an attempt by the John Bauer Concert Company to build an audience for new music.

Area recording studios began attracting national accounts, led by Steve Miller who recorded both *Fly Like an Eagle* and *Book of Dreams* at Seattle's Kaye-Smith studios. Perhaps the most surprising force was Philadelphia soul producer and writer Thom Bell who moved himself and his operations to Seattle and Tacoma during the closing years of the 1970s.

On the heels of Heart's success five Seattle bands landed major label contracts—Striker, Bighorn, TKO, Gabriel and the Dixon House band. All of which made for a lot of "national breakout" talk. It should be noted that all five recording debuts came a cropper, setting the tone for subsequent events on the Pacific Northwest scene.

1981 has seen the sour consolidation of what is maybe best summed up, musically, by Danny O'Keefe's "Good Time Charley's Got the Blues." This mournful lament by a native somehow suggests the area's penchant for missed opportunities and almost was's.

There's still an abundance of rock and related activity. And some important regional signings have characterized the year. Among them, Doug & The Slugs and Lover Boy, both from Vancouver, B.C. Quarter Flash (nee Seafood Mamma) and Johnny & the Distractions, both from Portland, Oregon have landed major label berths. Independent recording and a vital (if perhaps waning) club scene continue, but particularly in Seattle there's been a loss of both direction and momentum, even while some music spheres positively flourish.

Seattle's *Rocket,* a monthly free music tabloid, has a circulation of 60,000. *Northwest Disc-coveries,* edited and published by Bruce Smith, continues to document the area's explosion of studios and recordings. Seattle is also home for at least a half-dozen fanzines.

But a lot of the recent past's promise seems to have dissipated. Epicenter returned from its excursions to L.A.'s studios with no word on the outcome of the sessions, the band's future in doubt.

Archetypical of what's happened this year are the respective fates of Modern Productions, a shoestring production outfit responsible for some of the most exciting of Seattle shows and records in the past two years; and two talented local rock bands, the Magnetics and the Heats.

Mid-year Modern Productions called it quits with a Gang of Four concert at The Showbox, a seedy Art

Deco nightclub which had seen dozens of important debuts under Modern's management.

With no apologies to Heart's *Live Greatest Hits,* an odd half album which predictably yielded a hit single in the band's tepid remake of Aaron Neville's "Tell It Like It Is," perhaps the best album to come out of Seattle in 1981 was *Rockabilly Fool* by the Magnetics.

Released by Rolling Rock, the lp displayed command and subtlety in both inspired remakes and surprising originals. True to Seattle's tradition, the Magnetics split immediately after the lp was released. Part of the ensemble retained the name while the rest of the troupe, dubbing itself The 88's, began commuting to Los Angeles.

The *Rockabilly Fools* album itself got little distribution and only marginal attention from the same critics who were eagerly hyping any British rockabilly revival band with a sufficiently audacious collection of pompadours.

For their part, The Heats embodied much of the excitement of the Seattle club scene of a couple of summers ago. The quartet's convincing reworking of classic British and Northwest rock made them the city's favorite performing band.

Signed by Albatross Productions, Heart's management company, an independent single was released two years ago which did very well regionally. An album *Have An Idea,* produced by Heart's Howard Leese and dates opening for the Knack followed.

Currently, the Heats are back on the same stages which launched the band, playing for enthusiastic, capacity audiences but unable to break out of regional confinement.

The malaise seems general. Although the club scene remains vital—Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers capped their Seattle date last summer by playing an unannounced second show at a downtown club, Astor Park—some venues closed and others changed their booking policies.

Last summer it was announced that the Paramount Northwest, a rococo vaudeville house which was Seattle's most venerable continuing rock stage, would change its music policies. The hall, which had taken a tremendous beating during its decade as a stomping ground for the rock tribes, was to be upgraded, perhaps to a legit theater operation.

The most exciting band to come out of the '81 c. ' scene, HiFi, bit the dust before year's end. Fronted by the incongruous teaming of British rock vocalist Ian Matthews and former Pavlov Dog David Surkamp (both area residents), the two went their separate ways in August. Matthews was one Seattle artist who did land a contract, but with the badly ailing RSO label.

KZAM-AM, which tried to draw on the vitality of the area rock scene and link it to British and U.S. new wave trends with its "rock of the '80s" format, was also a casualty. After a disappointing year of no ratings, the station switched to an "automated" jazz program, applying for the call letters KJAZ. KYAC, for many years Seattle's black oriented broadcaster, also disappeared from the dial, becoming K-FOX.

For the first time in years a rock station, KISW, was number one in the mid-year ratings. That the FM rocker is a Burhart-Abrams consulted station obviously is not an omen of regional vitality.

Even the corporate rockers of Heart seemed affected, the band demonstrably restless in its success. Two of its members sought performance outlets aside from the band's relentless touring and recording schedule. And there were persistant rumors that the Wilson Sisters might strike out on their own.

As mysteriously as he'd come, Thom Bell closed his Seattle office and moved the Mighty Three publishing operation to Los Angeles. Any relief from the gloomy atmosphere came from the music itself. Whatever its commercial prospects, that at least still showed most of the vital signs.

Besides the Magnetics LP, good Seattle recordings of the year included an aptly named new LP from Jr. Cadillac, *In For Life,* a 45 by The Pins which rocked up the Simon and Garfunkel chestnut, "I Am A Rock;" a first single from The Cowboys (an exemplary performing unit) and 45s from Student Nurses, heard in at least a few New York rock clubs; the Blackouts; and a second independent single from The Heats.

Seminal recordings from the early '60s Pacific Northwest rock scene, including lps by the Wailers and Sonics, were re-released and distributed by Portland's Sande Records and Tacoma's Etiquette label, the latter the musician-run indie which had originally pressed these increasingly legendary discs.

So, for not the first time, the elusive "national breakout" often predicted for the Pacific Northwest didn't happen. With full respect to the area's hard-working bands, music mavens and musicians (including many fine ones not mentioned here), in the long run it perhaps doesn't matter.

The strength of Pacific Northwest music has always been its self-reliance, its greatest weakness its insularity. The earlier rock explosion happened with only sporadic national exposure (like the Fleetwood's "Come Softly To Me" or the Wailer's instrumental hit, "Tall Cool One"), but it happened on its own.

There's a continuity to Seattle music which partially makes up for its isolation. First American Records, an active local label, is headed by Jerry Dennon, the teen entrepreneur who first released "Louie, Louie." Even as their recordings were being re-discovered in this country and England, members of the Wailers and the Sonics are still active on the local club scene.

Something else which more than one Seattle rocker remembers, and which has an effect on their expectations, is that most of the musical greats from the area, most prominently Jimi Hendrix, made their mark in other cities and parts of the world. Seattle, goes the thinking, may never be in the national spotlight, but it's a great place to make music.

BOSTON

BY JIM SULLIVAN

I've always thought Ian Hunter's "Cleveland Rocks" was sort of a sad song. It made more sense to this Yank anyway as "England Rocks," its original incarnation. In England—where it's not just another entertainment option, but a kicking, screaming, ever-changing, necessary form of expression—rock 'n' roll continues to matter. Kick it over. Never mind the British music magazine trend of the week. Heavy metal, ska, punk, soul, rockabilly, post-industrial punk, neo-psychedelia—whatever—are jagged slices of rock 'n' roll, *popular* rock 'n' roll, that challenge the status quo.

Ian Hunter plays "Cleveland Rocks" as a paean to rocking in American cities. In concert, he'll weave his way through a call-and-response litany of cities—with the hometown always a favorite—and leave you believing that, yes, Boston (or wherever) rocks. Fists in the air, exultation, uplifting release and all of that. It's only when the music's over, after the lights are on, that you wonder a bit. Five hundred people in Boston rock and where is everybody else? Sitting 'round watching television? Waiting for the next Styx show?

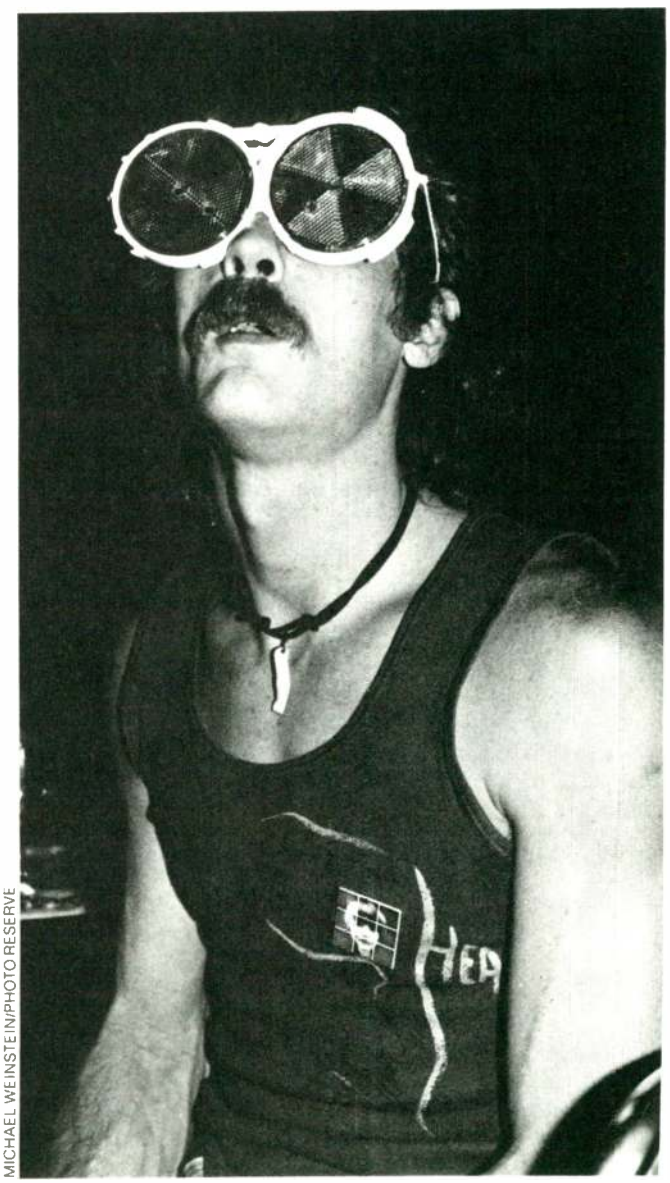
Could be.

Boston, a city that takes no small amount of pride in the fact that it's not located in the midwest, does rock—up to a point and more than most. It's a college town, it's a town of musical colleges (Berklee College of Music, New England Conservatory of Music, J. Geils' College of Musical Knowledge) and perhaps, at least in part, because of that Boston doesn't just tolerate but welcomes new musical expression. There are good radio outlets (WBCN, WERS, WMBR, WLYN, WHRB) and venues for both local and top national acts to play on most days of the week.

Still, something's wrong with this picture.

Certain facts and figures are inescapable and the most recent Arbitron ratings loom like Three Mile Island towers over Boston music fans who entertain the nation that rock 'n' roll should move onward. WCOZ-FM, an album rock station geared toward yesterday's rebels (today's established stars) and today's stars who are comfortable and won't shake anything up much, is by far the top rated radio station in the city. (Oh, and if you're talking about rock radio in general, the country. WCOZ has received the highest ratings ever for any AOR.)

WCOZ, a former progressive rock station, found a new religion in May 1980, when it purchased the Gospel according to John. Mild mannered John Sebastian, a former AM programmer from Arizona, breezed into town, surveyed the market, and coolly transformed WCOZ from a semi-risky rocker that landed in the middle of the ratings pack into the fat cat top dog. In the last Arbitron book, WCOZ came about a half a percentage point away from tripling the ratings of its rock 'n' roll rival, WBCN, one of America's few semi-



MICHAEL WEINSTEIN/PHOTO RESERVE

freewheeling progressives.

Boston (some hypothesize *suburban* Boston) went out and bought the WCOZ product as it was packaged—safe, pseudo-aggressive hard rock promoted relentlessly as "kick ass rock 'n' roll."

"They don't kick anyone's ass, they lick ass," comments Oedipus, Boston new wave radio pioneer and current program director for WBCN. "They give people what they know, there's never a challenge. They're the television form of radio—simplistic, naive, unthreatening. It's a safe, comfortable form of image and a disservice to anyone who cares about music."

But it's Number One. Before WCOZ rose to prominence with its heavily researched rock superstar format, Journey, Styx, REO Speedwagon and Kansas kept a polite distance from metro Boston which was, after all, the hometown of successful new wavers like the Cars.

It's still the home of the Cars (more on that later), but the MOR mega-stars now feel comfy in Boston. So comfy that the 1981 summertime 70-plus nationwide radio station hookup for REO Speedwagon originated from Boston Garden. REO Speedwagon thanked the fans for their longterm support and told them they, too, could make it to the top if they just kept pushin'.

WCOZ didn't change the scene as much as they tapped into a market waiting to be exploited—rock that asks little more than polite appreciation. It's a contradiction in terms for those whose lives it envelopes, but it's a panacea for those lives it plays the background soundtrack to.

And so Boston buys into the midwestern rock dream. The not-so-glad realization hits all over again that popular rock 'n' roll has changed, perhaps irrevocably. No longer songs of times that-are-a-changin' and songs of street fighting men, popular rock 'n' roll is a song that promises *I wanna keep on lovin' you, it's the only thing I wanna do.*

That's statistical realism, not pessimism. But that's also enough of it because, comparatively, Boston rocks and rocks well. Boston is not—and likely won't ever be—a music business center like New York or Los Angeles. It has, however, a progressive music scene—and perhaps because of its non-New York or L.A. status, one that exists without accompanying excessive hyperbole. The "underground" rumbles fiercely under the *Billboard* mainstream. And the Boston local music scene—diverse and vital—has a mainstream of its own that exists outside the strata of typical mainstream rock.

Popular drawing bands range from the eclectic art-rock of Human Sexual Response to the early Stones-like snot rock of the Taxi Boys; from the Springsteen-inspired heart and soul rock revue of the Stompers to the twisting, progressive dance-and-think rock of the Peter Dayton Band. There's the hard pop of the Atlantics, the multi-dimensional, theatrical pop of Pastiche, the punk/pop girl group sound of City Thrills. Additionally, there's an ever-burgeoning underground of musically left-wing groups such as CCCP-TV, People in Stores, Someone and the Somebodies, Artyard and the Young Snakes.

Mission of Burma, a hard-hitting trio with a musical impact not unlike the Gang of Four, is Boston's most intense band. On a good night Burma draws the listener into a churning dance groove with music that careens roller coaster-like through the outer limits of onrushing rhythms.

Fame and fortune is a stupid game and fame and fortune is the game I play, sings Burma's Roger Miller on their new EP, *signals, calls and marches.* Burma resides on the cutting edge. With jagged, grinding rhythms, desperate vocals and heart-attack percussion, Burma creates an aggressive, jangling sound—things fall apart and then are interestingly reassembled. And, as you might guess, with an approach like that, they're not really playing the fame and fortune game. Not in American mass success terms, anyway.

The 550-seat Paradise is Boston's pre-eminent showcase club and the usual stop for major label contracted American and English bands on their first trek. Sound: Excellent. Ambience: Good and improving. The Paradise has rescinded a no-dancing rule and opened up a dance area in front of the stage. Despite the oft-cursed nailed down tables and chairs the club is generally comfortable and a good place to listen and/or dance.

The Metro, the Channel and the Bradford Hotel Ballroom are 1000-plus steps up from the Paradise. The Bradford just recently re-opened for rock; the Metro and the Channel are major competitors for shows. Both have their problems (Metro—often questionable sound quality; Channel—location is not prime) but they provide a good pre-theater leap for many of the new groups. (Seems like the Psychedelic Furs are making Boston their adopted home.) The jumps to the majors are the Orpheum (2,800) and (gulp) the Garden (15,000).

Below the Paradise is a slew of smaller clubs, with the most important, the Underground (which saw the Cure, New Order and Pylon and provided a haven for the local radical fringe) recently forced to close by its landlord, Boston University. But Streets, just up the road, promises to bring the Underground scene back (and with better sound and viewing potential). It's no overstatement to say something interesting is happening on most days of the week—and without the inflated prices and late starting times that plague New York. Time and again you'll find the warm (or red hot) glow of rock 'n' roll emotion returning—sometimes, unfortunately, on the same night (The Ramones, the Specials and Paul Butterfield all clashed in late August.)

Even if more than ever rock 'n' roll in the '80s won't change the world (did somebody once say it could?), it is taken seriously by a number of Boston fans and musicians. The Cars, in fact, opted not to flee the city as success came, but to remain and aid the scene. When they twice sold out Boston Garden this year, they used two very good, (but in suburbia, unknown) local groups, the Peter Dayton Band and the New Models. The Cars bought Intermedia recording studio, renamed it Synchro Sound, and are presently recording their fourth record there. "I expect national bands will come in from out of town to record there," says the Cars' Ric Ocasek, "and we want local bands to be able to record there, too. It will be worked so it won't be like a high-priced New York or L.A. studio."

There is commitment in Boston to making music that communicates. And if it's only for two minutes, within the confines a pop song, at least that's a start.

TOKYO

BY ROB PATTERSON

The Japanese music scene is an enigma. Most Americans have only woefully limited information like which Western groups are a hit there (witness the spate of "Live at Budokan" two-fers), or which Pink Lady is Mei or Kei.

The idea that the Japanese are voracious consumers of imported music is slightly misleading. Japan *is* a healthy market for many kinds of foreign acts; visit a Japanese record store and you'll find a full complement of the latest and greatest overseas discs from punk to funk, a treasure trove of oldies which are out of print in the States, and quite a few customers.

But Japanese radio and charts tell the tale: at least fifteen slots of their top twenty are always held by Japanese acts, singing *in* Japanese pop music made *for* Japanese, ninety-nine percent of which we'll never hear in America. The one percent that slipped through—Pink Lady—is indicative of what remains behind the bamboo curtain.

The carefully manicured acts all share one commonality whatever the musical style they play, be it rock, pop, or folk—it may not be quite easy listening, but it is never taxing or troublesome. Even if you can't understand the lyrics, the message is clear. Culturally cognizant of the importance of social respect and order on a crowded island, the Japanese grind out the most bland, calculated, innocuous and inoffensive pop pap imaginable. Japan's best-selling rock groups wouldn't dare defend their ancestors.

Unlike most countries, where groups are signed to a record label, in Japan the acts are employees of the record company. Like their counterparts on the assembly lines of Datsun and National Panasonic, artists are loyal company employees, and in Japan, loyalty to one's employer is a lifetime affair.

What happens if they don't toe the cultural line? The arrests of some Japanese pop stars for marijuana a few years back was a major scandal. Public and corporate censure kept them from recording until they had paid penitance and openly apologized. Still their careers have never been the same since. (All drugs, including grass and hash, are illicit and rare as plutonium in Japan, and foreigners don't offend the Japanese by asking for them. That may be one reason why McCartney brought his own).

The language factor is the major stumbling block for Japanese groups who wish to extend their horizons. The Japanese want their groups to sing in Japanese, and even their first significant rock export—The Sadistic Mika Band—refused to give up that difference (a fact that seemed charming in the West). Their wild, shivering rock concoction was fascinating to foreign ears, and even though they worked with producer Chris Thomas (Sex Pistols, Pretenders) and toured Britain with Roxy Music, their steadfastly Japanese lyrics limited the Mika Band's appeal.

Now disbanded (Mika lives in England with Thomas after splitting with her husband, band leader Kazuhiko Katoh), Sadistic Mika left a mission and a drummer to be inherited by the latest and most promising Japanese offering to the West—Yellow Magic Orchestra. Although it is drummer Yukihiro Takahashi's bedrock rhythms that align Yellow Magic's sound with Western rock 'n' roll, one cannot discount the importance of the final concession—YMO sing in English.

Well . . . not exactly in English. The lyrics penned by English expatriate Chris Mosdell are chains of phrases and snatches that YMO filter and synthesizes almost beyond comprehension. The end result sounds like something between our two languages—a virtual glossalalia which appeals overseas with the same simplicity as Abba's Yabba-Dabba-Doo chants, whie keeping the fans at home happy by sounding . . . Japanese. That may explain why Yellow Magic are one of Japan's hottest acts (four albums at once in the top twenty this last spring) while singing in English.

Overseas, YMO's "magic" is the way they cross all musical camps. In the U.S. they received disco play on their first single—"Computer Game"—but toured new wave venues. Their style is a poppy amalgamation of electronic musics made for the most part by synthesizer and a Roland MC8 computer; one hears in YMO the hipper sounds of Bowie, Eno, Kraftwerk, and Roxy Music as well as the internationally appealing Eurodisco of Giorgio Moroder, and even the silliness of the old top-40 hit "Hot Popcorn." The guitar styles they employ range from rock to jazz fusion.

Though to Western ears the name "Yellow Magic" sounds quite tongue in cheek, the band insists there's no humor in the name. "There are two kinds of magic," says Sakamoto, "white and black. We wanted to propose something different from these, something neutral and apart from those kinds of judgments—Yellow Magic."

The band feels their success at home is "based on the fact that the Japanese have finally found someone who

can be successful abroad. We are heroes." Yet overseas they wanted to, in Hosano's words, "create something really powerful and new . . . that would be powerful anywhere—Japan, America, England, Europe. In Japan everyone wanted to reach the standards of Westerners. Instead of following what was done overseas, we wanted to do something original from Japan.

YMO's second U.S. album—*Multiples*—goes a long way towards proving that point. It is much more powerful than their first in sound, style, and songs (chosen from two Japanese releases). Although thematically the record is rife with Japanese essence (from the sci-fi of "Rydeen" to the Tokyo-inspired "Technopolis" to the politely Japanese protest of "Solid State Survivor"), their appealing synthesis of Western elements is still strong, although the influences this time are less apparent. The only mistake made by A&M, their label here, is not including a wonderful and humorous YMO version of Archie Bell and The Drell's "Tighten Up." ("Herro! We are YMO, from Tokyo, Japan!")

YMO's broad musical latitude is encouraged by their record company, the small and hungry independent Alfa. Started two years ago from the base of a music publishing firm, Alfa has had the foresight to delve deeply into new and progressive music while distributing their similarly inclined American affiliate, A&M, and breaking such A&M acts in Japan as The Police, Supertramp, Rita Coolidge, and Herb Alpert.

Soon to open shop in the States, Alfa has a number of promising offerings for the international scene. Sheena and the Rokkets are no doubt the closest Japanese act to the new wave "skinny tie" pop-rock so common now in the U.S. and England, and hold their own with the competition. Lead singer Sheena Rocket is a charming and cute Japanese version of Ronnie Spector, but the band's vision is no doubt provided by lead guitarist Makoto Ayukawa, who formerly led a Japanese blues-based group named Son House, after the famous blues singer. As Ayukawa resembles an elongated, Japanese Elvis Costello, it's no surprise that the Rokkets debuted as the support act for Costello's '78 Japanese tour. The Rokkets sing in both Japanese and English, sometimes in the same song. Produced by YMO's Hosano, they are modern and intelligent in a way that Westerners should find appealing.

The one other Japanese "new wave" act already known to Western ears are The Plastics. Having toured the States and opened in Japan for the B-52's, The Plastics are by far the most unique of the new Japanese acts, creating their music from synthesizers and rhythm boxes while offering a stage show where they gyrate about and jabber like twisted and cross-circuited robots. The vision of three graphic artists whose interest and talent in music was minimal, The Plastics skirt the experimental fringe in a decidedly Japanese manner. "Style" is their byword—a modernist, post-industrial frenzy that neatly expresses the curious meshing of East and West one encounters in Japan.

Therefore most new Japanese acts have their Western equivalents. Lizards! are an act in the hard rock mold, while Friction (who are produced by YMO's Sakamoto) pursue the power pop vein. They have their own Chuck Berry stylist—Ekechi Yaosa—as well as a group who played N.Y. Dolls songs, Antoinette. There's even a Japanese duo called Jisatsu (meaning "suicide") composed of a drummer and manic guitarist who emulate the American act Suicide.

Throughout Tokyo there are many clubs and cafes which cater to specific musical tastes, and one can find a devoted audience for any style—jazz, rock, pop, folk, and even bluegrass. At those clubs frequented by devotees of a style, one finds extensive record collections and even discographies with track-by-track listings of the musicians involved.

A circuit of small new wave clubs has also appeared in Tokyo, springing up near the subway stops in various sections. The acts go on at the unusually early hour of 6:30, since the Japanese youth must have their fun and get home before the subways close at 11:30.

The most noted of these clubs is the Shijuku loft, where even Western acts have put in an appearance. An early evening visit to a typical Tokyo punk club (the Yanaura loft, one floor above a strip club in the busy Shibya section, and about the size of a typical American living room) found a group called Syze warming up. A Stones-styled band with a Jaggeresque singer, their look was punk-perfect except that all their instruments and amplifiers were brand new (Japanese youth have more disposable income than any other youth group in the world). Waiting on line was even a Japanese Sid Vicious clone, leather, spike haircut and all. Though he had the style down, one doubts that he shared Sid's alienating and violent tendencies.

Nearby one finds Cream Soda, a shop with fashions for the Fifties rocker, while around the corner is The Crocodile, Tokyo's only late night rock club. A place where those in the rock scene gather, The Crocodile has a mural from the cover of *Hotel California* on one wall and a Hipgnosis cover for Obisba on the other, menus set in Western album covers such as Steely Dan's *Aja*, a collection of rock videos, and a stand selling the wares of Tokyo's Natty Dread reggae shop.

What should be apparent by now is the Japanese consciousness of style. Style, especially the visual aspects, has a lot to do with what they like in Western acts.

One major factor is prettiness. The success of Cheap Trick, Eric Carmen, and The Police in Japan is based on the cuteness of Robin Zander, Eric, and Sting as much as their music. The faces of good looking artists are done up in full color spreads in such rock magazines as *Music Life, Jam,* and *Onganku Senka*, and the young Japanese girls lap it up like kittens drinking cream. Their parents encourage these crushes, so the girls get it out of their systems before entering the still commonly arranged marriages. These Japanese teeny-boppers shatter the mold of the polite and restrained Japanese audience with their screams and frenzied pursuit of their favorite stars.

Although prettiness hardly explains why Japan is a heavy-metal heaven, the showiness aspect of style certainly does. Acts like Deep Purple, Judas Priest, and Kiss present the Japanese with a larger-than-life stage show that the audience there can relate to in the purest sense of fantasy. Kiss were perfect for Japan with their Kabuki makeup, while Cheap Trick's massive success

SUKITA

combines Zander's cuteness with Rick Neilson's showy antics and strange garb.

Certain Western acts that have neither aspect or style, such as the Grateful Dead, just don't hold an appeal for the Japanese. For their audience there must often be that visual hook. While I was in Japan the only two American acts in the top twenty were Karla Bonoff and John David Souther. Though neither has the visual style one would expect the Japanese to latch onto, both ply the softer, inoffensive rock sounds that are so successful for native Japanese acts, and could be considered reasonably good looking. On tour at the same time were the Commodores—a handsome bunch of fellows whose sound is soft and safe.

Within the realm of new wave and punk, the Japanese seem to pick up on acts with a visual impact like the B-52's and Blondie, while the anger of Elvis Costello and The Sex Pistols is something they can't really relate to. After his '78 tour Costello found the Japanese so unforthcoming that he vowed never to return, but The Stranglers, whose anger is translated into a stage show and stance, are quite big there. And although you'll see Japanese kids adopting the looks of punks or mods or what-have-you, what they've picked up on is the *look*, not the emotional content.

The same Japanese mania for anything Western makes their record stores well worth a visit. One can still find such gems as old James Brown discs on King as well as many out-of-stock Atlantic-Atco soul records. They even have a complete boxed set of Hank Williams music that is shamefully not available in Hank's native land.


charts
SLOW HAND—
Planet 47929 (Elektra)
THE THEME
AMERICAN
Elektra 47147
STOP
HEART
Stevie Nicks
LADY YOU
The Commodores
Motown 1514
ENDLESS LOVE—
Diana Ross & Lior
TITLE-Artist-Label
THIS WEEK
LAST WEEK
ARTIST
Title
Label, Number (Dist. Label)
Weeks on Chart
FOREIGNER
4
Atlantic SD 16999
STEVIE NICKS
Bella Donna
Modern Records MR 38139 (Atlan
JOURNEY
Escape TC 37408
Columbia TC 37408
PAT BENATAR
Precious Time
Chrysalis CHR 1346
MOODY BLUES
Long Distance Voyager
Threshold THR L 2901 (Polygram)
BILLY SQUIER
Don't Say No
THE COMMODORES
In The Pocket
Motown MB 995M1
POINTER SISTERS
Black & White
Planet P 18 (Elektra)
SOUNDTRACK
Endless Love
Mercury SRM 1 2001 (Polygram)
TOM PETTY AND THE
HEARTBREAKERS
Hard Promises
Backstreet BSR 5160 (MCA)
KIM CARNES
Mistaken Identity
EMI America SO 17052
ALABAMA
Feels So Right
RCA AHL1 3930
STYX
Paradise Theatre
A&M SP 3719
Kenny Rogers
Weeks in
Highest
THIS WEEK
LAST WEEK
Weeks on Chart

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING AUGUST 30, 1980

1. **BACK IN BLACK** — AC/DC — *Atlantic*
2. **FLESH AND BLOOD** — Roxy Music — *Polydor*
3. **GLORY ROAD** — Gillan — *Virgin*
4. **DEEPEST PURPLE** — Deep Purple — *Harvest*
5. **GIVE ME THE NIGHT** — George Benson — *Warner Bros.*
6. **OFF THE WALL** — Michael Jackson — *Epic*
7. **XANADU** — Soundtrack — *Jet*
8. **SEARCHING FOR THE YOUNG SOUL REBELS** — Dexy s Midnight Runners — *Parlophone*
9. **KALEIDOSCOPE** — Siouxsie & Banshees — *Polydor*
10. **SKY 2** — Sky — *Ariola*
11. **EMOTIONAL RESCUE** — Rolling Stones — *Rolling Stones*
12. **DIANA** — Diana Ross — *Motown*
13. **UPRISING** — Bob Marley — *Island*
14. **THE GAME** — Queen — *EMI*
15. **McCARTNEY II** — Paul McCartney — *Parlophone*
16. **MANILOW MAGIC** — Barry Manilow — *Arista*
17. **CLOSER** — Joy Division — *Factory*
18. **LIVE 1979** — Hawkwind — *Bronze*
19. **ME, MYSELF, I** — Joan Armatrading — *A&M*
20. **REGGATTA DE BLANC** — Police — *A&M*
21. **VIENNA** — Ultravox — *Chrysalis*
22. **I JUST CAN'T STOP IT** — Beat — *Go-Feet*
23. **PETER GABRIEL** — Peter Gabriel — *Charisma*
24. **ANOTHER STRING OF HITS** — Shadows — *EMI*
25. **BAT OUT OF HELL** — Meat Loaf — *Cleveland Intl/Epic*
26. **BREAKING GLASS** — Hazel O'Connor — *A&M*
27. **LIVE AT LAST** — Black Sabbath — *Nems*
28. **DUKE** — Genesis — *Charisma*
29. **MAGIC REGGAE** — Various — *K-tel*
30. **OUTLANDOS D'AMOUR** — Police — *A&M*
31. **ONE STEP BEYOND** — Madness — *Stiff*
32. **KING OF THE ROAD** — Boxcar Willie — *Warwick*
33. **CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC** — Soundtrack — *Mercury*
34. **WAR OF THE WORLD** — Jeff Wayne's Musical Version — *CBS*
35. **FROM A TO B** — New Musik — *GTO*
36. **CROCODILES** — Echo & Bunnymen — *Korova*
37. **READY AND WILLING** — Whitesnake — *United Artists*
38. **WHEELS OF STEEL** — Saxon — *Carrere*
39. **CULTOSARUS ERECTUS** — Blue Oyster Cult — *CBS*
40. **DUMB WAITERS** — Korgis — *Tenor*

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING AUGUST 16, 1980

1. **THE ROLLING STONES** — Emotional Rescue — *Rolling Stones*
2. **JACKSON BROWNE** — Hold Out — *Asylum*
3. **BILLY JOEL** — Glass Houses — *Columbia*
4. **SOUNDTRACK** — Urban Cowboy — *FullMoon/Asylum*
5. **QUEEN** — The Game — *Elektra*
6. **DIANA ROSS** — Diana — *Motown*
7. **CHRISTOPHER CROSS** — Christopher Cross — *Warner Bros.*
8. **SOUNDTRACK** — Fame — *RSO*
9. **GEORGE BENSON** — Give Me The Night — *Warner Bros.*
10. **BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND** — Against The Wind — *Capitol*
11. **PETE TOWNSHEND** — Empty Glass — *Atco*
12. **THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND** — Full Moon — *Epic*
13. **S.O.S.** — The S.O.S. Band — *Tabu*
14. **THE KINKS** — One For The Road — *Arista*
15. **ROSSINGTON COLLINS BAND** — Anytime Anyplace Anywhere — *MCA*
16. **GENESIS** — Duke — *Atlantic*
17. **SOUNDTRACK** — Xanadu — *MCA*
18. **AC/DC** — Back In Black — *Atlantic*
19. **TEDDY PENDERGRASS** — TP — *P.I.R.*
20. **COMMODORES** — Heroes — *Motown*
21. **SOUNDTRACK** — The Blues Brothers — *Atlantic*
22. **ERIC CLAPTON** — Just One Night — *RSO*
23. **PETER GABRIEL** — Peter Gabriel — *Mercury*
24. **BOZ SCAGGS** — Middle Man — *Columbia*
25. **CAMEO** — Cameosis — *Chocolate City*
26. **LARRY GRAHAM** — One In A Million You — *Warner Bros.*
27. **SOUNDTRACK** — The Empire Strikes Back — *RSO*
28. **HERB ALPERT** — Beyond — *A&M*
29. **AL JARREAU** — This Time — *Warner Bros.*
30. **CHIC** — Real People — *Atlantic*
31. **DIONNE WARWICK** — No Night So Long — *Arista*
32. **JEFF BECK** — There And Back — *Epic*
33. **SOUNDTRACK** — McVicar — *Polydor*
34. **BLUE OYSTER CULT** — Cultosaurus Erectus — *Columbia*
35. **DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES** — Voices — *RCA*
36. **THE CHIPMUNKS** — Chipmunk Punk — *Excelsior*
37. **MICHAEL JACKSON** — Off The Wall — *Epic*
38. **ELVIS PRESLEY** — Elvis Aron Presley — *RCA*
39. **PAT BENATAR** — Crimes Of Passion — *Chrysalis*
40. **PAUL McCARTNEY** — McCartney II — *Columbia*

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 20, 1980

1. **NEVER FOREVER** — Kate Bush — *EMI*
2. **SIGNING OFF** — UB40 — *Graduate*
3. **TELEKON** — Gary Numan — *Beggars Banquet*
4. **MANILOW MAGIC** — Barry Manilow — *Arista*
5. **I'M NO HERO** — Cliff Richard — *EMI*
6. **FLESH AND BLOOD** — Roxy Music — *Polydor*
7. **OSIE OSBOURNE'S BLIZZARD OF OZ** — *Jet*
8. **GIVE ME THE NIGHT** — George Benson — *Warner Bros.*
9. **HANX** — Stiff Little Fingers — *Chrysalis*
10. **NOW WE MAY BEGIN** — Randy Crawford — *Warner Bros.*
11. **BACK IN BLACK** — AC/DC — *Atlantic*
12. **DRAMA** — Yes — *Atlantic*
13. **MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP** — *Chrysalis*
14. **SKY 2** — Sky — *Ariola*
15. **I JUST CAN'T STOP IT** — Beat — *Beat*
16. **BLACK SEA** — XTC — *Virgin*
17. **CHANGE OF ADDRESS** — Shadows — *Polydor*
18. **BREAKING GLASS** — Hazel O'Connor — *A&M*
19. **DIANA** — Diana Ross — *Motown*
20. **ME, MYSELF, I** — Joan Armatrading — *A&M*
21. **I AM WOMAN** — Various — *Polystar*
22. **XANADU** — Soundtrack — *Jet*
23. **OFF THE WALL** — Michael Jackson — *Epic*
24. **ONE TRICK PONY** — Paul Simon — *Warner Bros.*
25. **FAME** — Soundtrack — *RSO*
26. **BAT OUT OF HELL** — Meat Loaf — *Epic/Cleveland Intl.*
27. **THE GAME** — Queen — *EMI*
28. **CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC** — Soundtrack — *Mercury*
29. **GLASS HOUSES** — Billy Joel — *CBS*
30. **DEEPEST PURPLE** — Deep Purple — *Harvest*
31. **GLORY ROAD** — Gillan — *Virgin*
32. **A** — Jethro Tull — *Chrysalis*
33. **FRESH FRUIT FOR ROTTING VEGETABLES** — Dead Kennedys — *Cherry Red*
34. **REGGATTA DE BLANC** — Police — *A&M*
35. **WILD PLANET** — B52's — *Island*
36. **DUKE** — Genesis — *Charisma*
37. **GREATEST HITS VOL. 2** — Abba — *Epic*
38. **UPRISING** — Bob Marley & Wailers — *Island*
39. **McVICAR** — Roger Daltrey — *Polydor*
40. **CLUES** — Robert Palmer — *Island*

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 27, 1980

1. **QUEEN** — The Game — *Elektra*
2. **JACKSON BROWNE** — Hold Out — *Asylum*
3. **DIANA ROSS** — Diana — *Motown*
4. **THE ROLLING STON** — Emotional Rescue — *Rolling Stones*
5. **THE CARS** — Panorama — *Elektra*
6. **GEORGE BENSON** — Give Me The Night — *Warner Bros.*
7. **SOUNDTRACK** — Xanadu — *MCA*
8. **SOUNDTRACK** — Urban Cowboy — *FullMoon/Asylum*
9. **PAT BENATAR** — Crimes Of Passion — *Chrysalis*
10. **CHRISTOPHER CROSS** — Christopher Cross — *Warner Bros.*
11. **SOUNDTRACK** — Fame — *RSO*
12. **AC/DC** — Back In Black — *Atlantic*
13. **ROSSINGTON COLLINS BAND** — Anytime Anyplace Anywhere — *MCA*
14. **SOUNDTRACK** — Honeysuckle Rose — *Columbia*
15. **TEDDY PENDERGRASS** — TP — *P.I.R.*
16. **BILLY JOEL** — Glass Houses — *Columbia*
17. **PAUL SIMON** — One Trick Pony — *Warner Bros.*
18. **THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND** — Full Moon — *Epic*
19. **YES** — Drama — *Atlantic*
20. **BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND** — Against The Wind — *Capitol*
21. **THE KINKS** — One For The Road — *Arista*
22. **AIR SUPPLY** — Lost In Love — *Arista*
23. **DIONNE WARWICK** — No Night So Long — *Arista*
24. **SOUNDTRACK** — McVicar — *Polydor*
25. **TOM BROWNE** — Love Approach — *Arista*
26. **PETER GABRIEL** — Peter Gabriel — *Mercury*
27. **ELVIS PRESLEY** — Elvis Aron Presley — *RCA*
28. **THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND** — Reach For The Sky — *Arista*
29. **DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES** — Voices — *RCA*
30. **COMMODORES** — Heroes — *Motown*
31. **LARRY GRAHAM** — One In A Million You — *Warner Bros.*
32. **MAZE** — Joy And Pain — *Capitol*
33. **PETE TOWNSHEND** — Empty Glass — *Atco*
34. **THE CHIPMUNKS** — Chipmunk Punk — *Excelsior*
35. **B-52'S** — Wild Planet — *Warner Bros.*
36. **EDDIE MONEY** — Playing For Keeps — *Columbia*
37. **L.T.D.** — Shine On — *A&M*
38. **THE O'JAYS** — The Year 2000 — *TSOP*
39. **EDDIE RABBITT** — Horizon — *Elektra*
40. **MINNIE RIPERTON** — Love Lives Forever — *Capitol*

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 11, 1980

1. **ZENYATTA MONDATTA** — Police — *A&M*
2. **GUILTY** — Barbra Streisand — *CBS*
3. **ABSOLUTELY** — Madness — *Stiff*
4. **MOUNTING EXCITEMENT** — Various — *K-tel*
5. **NEVER FOREVER** — Kate Bush — *EMI*
6. **SCARY MONSTERS** — David Bowie — *RCA*
7. **CHINATOWN** — Thin Lizzy — *Vertigo*
8. **THE VERY BEST OF DON McLEAN** — *United Artists*
9. **MORE SPECIALS** — Specials — *Chrysalis*
10. **MANILOW MAGIC** — Barry Manilow — *Arista*
11. **BREAKING GLASS** — Hazel O'Connor — *A&M*
12. **PARIS** — Supertramp — *A&M*
13. **TRIUMPH** — Jacksons — *Epic*
14. **THE LOVE ALBUM** — Various — *K-tel*
15. **I AM WOMAN** — Various — *Polystar*
16. **SIGNING OFF** — UB40 — *Graduate*
17. **MONSTERS OF ROCK** — Various — *Polydor*
18. **FLESH AND BLOOD** — Roxy Music — *Polydor*
19. **GOLD** — Three Degrees — *Ariola*
20. **GIVE ME THE NIGHT** — George Benson — *Warner Bros.*
21. **A TOUCH OF LOVE** — Gladys Knight & Pips — *K-tel*
22. **NOW WE MAY BEGIN** — Randy Crawford — *Warner Bros.*
23. **MIDNITE DYMANOS** — Matchbox — *Magnet*
24. **REGGATTA DE BLANC** — Police — *A&M*
25. **PAULINE MURRAY & THE INVISIBLE GIRLS** — *Elusive*
26. **DIANA** — Diana Ross — *Motown*
27. **TELEKON** — Gary Numan — *Beggars Banquet*
28. **I'M NO HERO** — Cliff Richard — *EMI*
29. **BACK IN BLACK** — AC/DC — *Atlantic*
30. **SKY 2** — Sky — *Ariola*
31. **OUTLANDOS D'AMOUR** — Police — *A&M*
32. **OSIE OSBOURNE'S BLIZZARD OF OZ** — *Jet*
33. **THE ABSOLUTE GAME** — Skids — *Virgin*
34. **THE GAME** — Queen — *EMI*
35. **KILIMANJARO** — Teardrop Explodes — *Mercury*
36. **GLORY ROAD** — Gillan — *Virgin*
37. **BLACK SEA** — XTC — *Virgin*
38. **BAT OUT OF HELL** — Meat Loaf — *Epic/Cleveland Intl.*
39. **I JUST CAN'T STOP IT** — Beat — *Go-Feet*
40. **CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION ALBUM** — Monty Python — *Charisma*

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 25, 1980

1. **BARBRA STREISAND** — Guilty — *Columbia*
2. **QUEEN** — The Game — *Elektra*
3. **THE DOOBIE BROTHERS** — One Step Closer — *Warner Bros.*
4. **DIANA ROSS** — Diana — *Motown*
5. **PAT BENATAR** — Crimes Of Passion — *Chrysalis*
6. **SOUNDTRACK** — Xanadu — *MCA*
7. **GEORGE BENSON** — Give Me The Night — *Warner Bros.*
8. **THE CARS** — Panorama — *Elektra*
9. **AC/DC** — Back In Black — *Atlantic*
10. **SUPERTRAMP** — Paris — *A&M*
11. **THE ROLLING STONES** — Emotional Rescue — *Rolling Stones*
12. **PAUL SIMON** — One Trick Pony — *Warner Bros.*
13. **SOUNDTRACK** — Honeysuckle Rose — *Columbia*
14. **SOUNDTRACK** — Urban Cowboy — *FullMoon/Asylum*
15. **KENNY ROGERS** — Greatest Hits — *Liberty*
16. **CHRISTOPHER CROSS** — Christopher Cross — *Warner Bros.*
17. **JACKSON BROWNE** — Hold Out — *Asylum*
18. **KENNY LOGGINS** — Alive — *Columbia*
19. **TOM BROWNE** — Love Approach — *Arista/GRP*
20. **THE JACKSONS** — Triumph — *Epic*
21. **ZAPP** — Zapp — *Warner Bros.*
22. **DAVID BOWIE** — Scary Monsters — *RCA*
23. **TEDDY PENDERGRASS** — TP — *P.I.R.*
24. **DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES** — Voices — *RCA*
25. **SOUNDTRACK** — Fame — *RSO*
26. **BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND** — Against The Wind — *Capitol*
27. **YES** — Drama — *Atlantic*
28. **DEVO** — Freedom Of Choice — *Warner Bros.*
29. **L.T.D.** — Shine On — *A&M*
30. **KANSAS** — Audio Visions — *Kirshner*
31. **B-52'S** — Wild Planet — *Warner Bros.*
32. **MOLLY HATCHET** — Beatin' The Odds — *Epic*
33. **ELVIS COSTELLO** — Taking Liberties — *Columbia*
34. **EDDIE RABBITT** — Horizon — *Elektra*
35. **BILLY JOEL** — Glass Houses — *Columbia*
36. **MICHAEL HENDERSON** — Wide Receiver — *Buddah*
37. **STEPHANIE MILLS** — Sweet Sensation — *20th Century*
38. **JONI MITCHELL** — Shadows And Light — *Asylum*
39. **AL STEWART AND SHOT IN THE DARK** — 24 Carrots — *Arista*
40. **JETHRO TULL** — A — *Chrysalis*

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 15, 1980

1 **SUPER TROUPER**
Abba
Epic

2 **GUILTY**
Barbra Streisand
CBS

3 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

4 **ZENYATTA MONDATTA**
Police
A&M

5 **NOT THE 9 O'CLOCK NEWS**
Various
BBC

6 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

7 **FOOLISH BEHAVIOUR**
Rod Stewart
Riva

8 **MANILOW MAGIC**
Barry Manilow
Arista

9 **ACE OF SPADES**
Motorhead
Bronze

10 **COUNTRY LEGENDS**
Various
Ronco

11 **STRONG ARM OF THE LAW**
Saxon
Carrere

12 **MAKING WAVES**
Nolans
Epic

13 **RADIO ACTIVE**
Various
Ronco

14 **THAT'S ORGANIZATION**
Orchestral Manoeuvers In The Dark
Virgin

15 **LITTLE MISS DYNAMITE**
Brenda Lee
Warwick

16 **SCARY MONSTERS**
David Bowie
RCA

17 **LIVE IN THE HEARTS OF THE CITY**
Whitesnake
United Artists

18 **ABSOLUTELY**
Madness
Stiff

19 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

20 **GOLD**
Three Degrees
Ariola

21 **THE LOVE ALBUM**
Various
K-tel

22 **THE JAZZ SINGER**
Neil Diamond
Capitol

23 **SIGNING OFF**
UB40
Graduate

24 **LIVE**
Eagles
Asylum

25 **FLESH AND BLOOD**
Roxy Music
Polydor

26 **JUST SUPPOSIN'**
Status Quo
Vertigo

27 **DOUBLE FANTASY**
John Lennon
Geffen

28 **AXE ATTACK**
Various
K-tel

29 **BREAKING GLASS**
Hazel O'Connor
A&M

30 **NEVER FOREVER**
Kate Bush
EMI

31 **THE VERY BEST OF ELTON JOHN**
K-tel

32 **GIVE ME THE NIGHT**
George Benson
Warner Bros.

33 **CHART EXPLOSION**
Various
K-tel

34 **HAWKS & DOVES**
Neil Young
Reprise

35 **REGGATTA DE BLANC**
Police
A&M

36 **QE2**
Mike Oldfield
Virgin

37 **ME AND BILLY WILLIAMS**
Max Boyce
EMI

38 **THE TURN OF A FRIENDLY CARD**
Alan Parsons Project
Arista

39 **MAKIN' MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

40 **SMOKIE'S HITS**
Smokie
Rak

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 29, 1980

1 **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**
The River
Columbia

2 **BARBRA STREISAND**
Guilty
Columbia

3 **KENNY ROGERS**
Greatest Hits
Liberty

4 **STEVIE WONDER**
Hotter Than July
Tamla

5 **QUEEN**
The Game
Elektra

6 **AC/DC**
Back In Black
Atlantic

7 **PAT BENATAR**
Crimes Of Passion
Chrysalis

8 **DIANA ROSS**
Diana
Motown

9 **THE DOOBIE BROTHERS**
One Step Closer
Warner Bros.

10 **THE JACKSONS**
Triumph
Epic

11 **THE POLICE**
Zenyatta Mondatta
A&M

12 **EARTH, WIND & FIRE**
Faces
ARC/Columbia

13 **DONNA SUMMER**
The Wanderer
Geffen

14 **EAGLES**
Eagles Live
Asylum

15 **KENNY LOGGINS**
Alive
Columbia

16 **SUPERTRAMP**
Paris
A&M

17 **DAVID BOWIE**
Scary Monsters
RCA

18 **ANNE MURRAY**
Anne Murray's Greatest Hits
Capitol

19 **GEORGE BENSON**
Give Me The Night
Warner Bros.

20 **THE ROLLING STONES**
Emotional Rescue
Rolling Stones

21 **TALKING HEADS**
Remain In Light
Sire

22 **DEVO**
Freedom Of Choice
Warner Bros.

23 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

24 **BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND**
Against The Wind
Capitol

25 **JACKSON BROWNE**
Hold Out
Asylum

26 **CHEAP TRICK**
All Shook Up
Epic

27 **THE DOORS**
Greatest Hits
Elektra

28 **LINDA RONSTADT**
Greatest Hits Vol. 2
Asylum

29 **KANSAS**
Audio Visions
Kirshner

30 **KOOL & THE GANG**
Celebrate
De-Lite

31 **TEDDY PENDERGRASS**
TP
P.I.R.

32 **NEIL DIAMOND**
The Jazz Singer
Capitol

33 **DIRE STRAITS**
Making Movies
Warner Bros.

34 **POINTER SISTERS**
Special Things
Planet

35 **PAUL SIMON**
One Trick Pony
Warner Bros.

36 **ROCKPILE**
Seconds Of Pleasure
Columbia

37 **SOUNDTRACK**
Times Square
RSO

38 **TEENA MARIE**
Irons In The Fire
Gordy

39 **SOUNDTRACK**
Honeysuckle Rose
Columbia

40 **THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT**
The Turn Of A Friendly Card
Arista

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 19, 1980

1 **SUPER TROUPER**
Abba
Epic

2 **DOUBLE FANTASY**
John Lennon & Yoko Ono
Geffen

3 **GREATEST HITS**
Dr. Hook
Capitol

4 **GUILTY**
Barbra Streisand
CBS

5 **MANILOW MAGIC**
Barry Manilow
Arista

6 **NOT THE NINE O'CLOCK NEWS**
Various
BBC

7 **ZENYATTA MONDATTA**
Police
A&M

8 **BARRY**
Barry Manilow
Arista

9 **CHART EXPLOSION**
Various
K-tel

10 **20 GOLDEN GREATS**
Ken Dodd
Warwick

11 **INSPIRATION**
Elvis Presley
K-tel

12 **CLASSICS FOR DREAMING**
James Last
Polydor

13 **AUTOAMERICAN**
Blondie
Chrysalis

14 **ABSOLUTELY**
Madness
Stiff

15 **THE JAZZ SINGER**
Neil Diamond
Capitol

16 **SOUND AFFECTS**
Jam
Polydor

17 **FLASH GORDON**
Queen
EMI

18 **FOOLISH BEHAVIOUR**
Rod Stewart
Riva

19 **SANDINISTA**
Clash
CBS

20 **20 NO. 1 HITS**
Brotherhood of Man
Warwick

21 **AXE ATTACK**
Various
K-tel

22 **KING OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

23 **BEAUTIFUL SUNDAY**
Lena Martell
Ronco

24 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

25 **SLADE SMASHES**
Slade
Polydor

26 **MAKING WAVES**
Nolans
Epic

27 **COUNTRY LEGENDS**
Various
Ronco

28 **THE LENGENDARY BIG BANDS**
Various
Ronco

29 **SIGNING OFF**
UB40
Graduate

30 **JUST SUPPOSIN'**
Status Quo
Vertigo

31 **LIVE**
Fleetwood Mac
Warner Bros.

32 **THE LOVE ALBUM**
Various
K-tel

33 **SCARY MONSTERS**
David Bowie
Island

34 **GOLD**
Three Degrees
K-tel

35 **NEVER FOREVER**
Kate Busy
EMI

36 **REJOICE**
St. Pauls Boys Choir
K-tel

37 **THE VERY BEST OF ELTON JOHN**
K-tel

38 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

39 **RADIO ACTIVE**
Various
Ronco

40 **BEATLE BALLADS**
Beatles
Parlophone

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 27, 1980

1 **JOHN LENNON/YOKO ONO**
Double Fantasy
Geffen

2 **BARBRA STREISAND**
Guilty
Columbia

3 **STEVIE WONDER**
Hotter Than July
Tamla

4 **AC/DC**
Back In Black
Atlantic

5 **PAT BENATAR**
Crimes Of Passion
Chrysalis

6 **EAGLES**
Eagles Live
Asylum

7 **KENNY ROGERS**
Greatest Hits
Liberty

8 **THE POLICE**
Zenyatta Mondatta
A&M

9 **NEIL DIAMOND**
The Jazz Singer
Capitol

10 **STEELY DAN**
Gaucho
MCA

11 **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**
The River
Columbia

12 **ROD STEWART**
Foolish Behaviour
Warner Bros.

13 **HEART**
Greatest Hits/Live
Epic

14 **QUEEN**
The Game
Elektra

15 **BLONDIE**
Autoamerican
Chrysalis

16 **ANNE MURRAY**
Anne Murray's Greatest Hits
Capitol

17 **THE JACKSONS**
Triumph
Epic

18 **EARTH, WIND & FIRE**
Faces
ARC/Columbia

19 **DIRE STRAITS**
Making Movies
Warner Bros.

20 **THE DOOBIE BROTHERS**
One Step Closer
Warner Bros.

21 **THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT**
The Turn Of A Friendly Card
Arista

22 **BARRY MANILOW**
Barry
Arista

23 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

24 **KOOL & THE GANG**
Celebrate
De-Lite

25 **THE DOORS**
Greatest Hits
Elektra

26 **BOZ SCAGGS**
Hits
Columbia

27 **ROCKPILE**
Seconds Of Pleasure
Columbia

28 **LINDA RONSTADT**
Greatest Hits Vol. 2
Asylum

29 **THE TALKING HEADS**
Remain In Light
Sire

30 **NEIL YOUNG**
Hawks And Doves
Reprise

31 **AIR SUPPLY**
Lost In Love
Arista

32 **ABBA**
Super Trouper
Atlantic

33 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

34 **BETTE MIDLER**
Divine Madness (Original Soundtrack)
Atlantic

35 **DAVID BOWIE**
Scary Monsters
RCA

36 **DIANA ROSS**
Diana
Motown

37 **DEVO**
Freedom Of Choice
Warner Bros.

38 **LEO SAYER**
Living In A Fantasy
Warner Bros.

39 **CHEAP TRICK**
All Shook Up
Epic

40 **DONNA SUMMER**
The Wanderer
Geffen

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING JANUARY 24 1981

1 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

2 **DOUBLE FANTASY**
John Lennon & Yoko Ono
Geffen

3 **THE VERY BEST OF DAVID BOWIE**
K-tel

4 **GREATEST HITS**
Dr. Hook
Capitol

5 **SUPER TROUPER**
Abba
Epic

6 **GUILTY**
Barbra Streisand
CBS

7 **IMAGINE**
John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band
Parlophone

8 **MANILOW MAGIC**
Barry Manilow
Arista

9 **MONDO BONGO**
Boomtown Rats
Mercury

10 **PARADISE THEATER**
Styx
A&M

11 **SHAVED FISH**
John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band
Parlophone

12 **ZENYATTA MONDATTA**
Police
A&M

13 **ARC OF A DIVER**
Stevie Winwood
Island

14 **FLASH GORDON**
Queen
EMI

15 **NOT THE 9 O'CLOCK NEWS**
Various
BBC

16 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

17 **MAKING MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

18 **ABSOLUTELY**
Madness
Stiff

19 **THE WILD THE WILLING & THE INNOCENT**
UFO
Chrysalis

20 **SIGNING OFF**
UB40
Graduate

21 **BARRY**
Barry Manilow
Arista

22 **YESSHOWS**
Yes
Atlantic

23 **SCARY MONSTERS**
David Bowie
RCA

24 **MAKING WAVES**
Nolans
Epic

25 **THE JAZZ SINGER**
Neil Diamond
Capitol

26 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

27 **AUTOAMERICAN**
Blondie
Chrysalis

28 **DIRK WEARS WHITE SOX**
Adam & Ants
Do It

29 **SOUND AFFECTS**
Jam
Polydor

30 **SANDINISTA**
Clash
CBS

31 **BAT OUT OF HELL**
Meat Loaf
Cleveland Intl/CBS

32 **NIGHTLIFE**
Various
K-tel

33 **FOOLISH BEHAVIOUR**
Rod Stewart
Riva

34 **FLESH AND BLOOD**
Roxy Music
Polydor

35 **SKY 2**
Sky
Ariola

36 **REGATTA DE BLANC**
Police
A&M

37 **20 GOLDEN GREATS**
Ken Dodd
Warwick

38 **I JUST CAN'T STOP IT**
The Beat
Go Feet

39 **LIVE**
Fleetwood Mac
Warner Bros.

40 **JUST SUPPOSIN'**
Status Quo
Vertigo

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING JANUARY 31 1981

1 **JOHN LENNON/YOKO ONO**
Double Fantasy
Geffen

2 **PAT BENATAR**
Crimes Of Passion
Chrysalis

3 **KENNY ROGERS**
Greatest Hits
Liberty

4 **STEVIE WONDER**
Hotter Than July
Tamla

5 **NEIL DIAMOND**
The Jazz Singer
Capitol

6 **AC/DC**
Back In Black
Atlantic

7 **THE POLICE**
Zenyatta Mondatta
A&M

8 **BARBRA STREISAND**
Guilty
Columbia

9 **STEELY DAN**
Gaucho
MCA

10 **BLONDIE**
Autoamerican
Chrysalis

11 **EAGLES**
Eagles Live
Asylum

12 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

13 **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**
The River
Columbia

14 **FLEETWOOD MAC**
Live
Warner Bros.

15 **BARRY MANILOW**
Barry
Arista

16 **THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT**
The Turn Of A Friendly Card
Arista

17 **ROD STEWART**
Foolish Behaviour
Warner Bros.

18 **STYX**
Paradise Theater
A&M

19 **KOOL & THE GANG**
Celebrate
De-Lite

20 **HEART**
Greatest Hits/Live
Epic

21 **DOLLY PARTON**
9 To 5 and Odd Jobs
RCA

22 **ABBA**
Super Trouper
Atlantic

23 **AIR SUPPLY**
Lost In Love
Arista

24 **BOZ SCAGGS**
Hits
Columbia

25 **QUEEN**
Flash Gordon (original soundtrack)
Elektra

26 **DIRE STRAITS**
Making Movies
Warner Bros.

27 **LAKESIDE**
Fantastic Voyage
Solar

28 **THE DOORS**
Greatest Hits
Elektra

29 **THE JACKSONS**
Triumph
Epic

30 **QUEEN**
The Game
Elektra

31 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

32 **ANNE MURRAY**
Anne Murray's Greatest Hits
Capitol

33 **THE DOOBIE BROTHERS**
One Step Closer
Warner Bros

34 **EARTH, WIND & FIRE**
Faces
ARC/Columbia

35 **BILLY JOEL**
Glass Houses
Columbia

36 **BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND**
Against The Wind
Capitol

37 **DIANA ROSS**
Diana
Motown

38 **ROCKPILE**
Seconds Of Pleasure
Columbia

39 **LEO SAYER**
Living In A Fantasy
Warner Bros.

40 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.**
Winelight
Elektra

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 14, 1981

1 **FACE VALUE**
Phil Collins
Virgin

2 **DOUBLE FANTASY**
John Lennon & Yoko Ono
Geffen

3 **MAKING PICTURES**
Rush
Mercury

4 **DIFFICULT TO CURE**
Rainbow
Polydor

5 **VIENNA**
Ultravox
Chrysalis

6 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

7 **DANCE CRAZE**
Soundtrack
2-Tone

8 **THE MEN IN BLACK**
Stranglers
Liberty

9 **MANILOW MAGIC**
Barry Manilow
Arista

10 **MAKING MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

11 **THE JAZZ SINGER**
Neil Diamond
Capitol

12 **THE VERY BEST OF DAVID BOWIE**
K-tel

13 **SHAVED FISH**
John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band
Parlophone

14 **BARRY**
Barry Manilow
Arista

15 **GUILTY**
Barbra Streisand
CBS

16 **IMAGINE**
John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band
Parlophone

17 **ARC OF A DIVER**
Stevie Winwood
Island

18 **DIMINISHED RESPONSIBILITY**
UK Subs
Gem

19 **VISAGE**
Visage
Polydor

20 **HIT MACHINE**
Various
K-tel

21 **AUTOAMERICAN**
Blondie
Chrysalis

22 **SUPER TROUPER**
Abba
Epic

23 **GREATEST HITS**
Dr. Hook
Capitol

24 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

25 **SOUTHERN FREEZE**
Freeze
Beggars Banquet

26 **ABSOLUTELY**
Madness
Stiff

27 **FAWLTY TOWERS VOL. 2**
Various
BBC

28 **DIRK WEARS WHITE SOX**
Adam & Ants
Do It

29 **CANDLES**
Heatwave
GTO

30 **TRUST**
Elvis Costello & Attractions
F-Beat

31 **MONDO BONGO**
Boomtown Rats
Mercury

32 **TAKE MY TIME**
Sheena Easton
EMI

33 **SKY 2**
Sky
Ariola

34 **BAT OUT OF HELL**
Meat Loaf
Cleveland Intl/CBS

35 **NOT THE 9 O'CLOCK NEWS**
Various
BBC

36 **SOUND AFFECTS**
Jam
Polydor

37 **PARADISE THEATER**
Styx
A&M

38 **SIGNING OFF**
UB40
Graduate

39 **MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS**
Brian Eno/David Byrne
Polydor

40 **REMAIN IN LIGHT**
Talking Heads
Sire

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 1981

1 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

2 **JOHN LENNON/YOKO ONO**
Double Fantasy
Geffen

3 **NEIL DIAMOND**
The Jazz Singer
Capitol

4 **STYX**
Paradise Theater
A&M

5 **THE POLICE**
Zenyatta Mondatta
A&M

6 **PAT BENATAR**
Crimes Of Passion
Chrysalis

7 **BLONDIE**
Autoamerican
Chrysalis

8 **KENNY ROGERS**
Greatest Hits
Liberty

9 **AC/DC**
Back In Black
Atlantic

10 **STEVIE WONDER**
Hotter Than July
Tamla

11 **KOOL & THE GANG**
Celebrate
De-Lite

12 **STEELY DAN**
Gaucho
MCA

13 **THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT**
The Turn Of A Friendly Card
Arista

14 **DOLLY PARTON**
9 To 5 and Odd Jobs
RCA

15 **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**
The River
Columbia

16 **LAKESIDE**
Fantastic Voyage
Solar

17 **ABBA**
Super Trouper
Atlantic

18 **THE GAP BAND**
III
Mercury

19 **BARBRA STREISAND**
Guilty
Columbia

20 **JOURNEY**
Captured
Columbia

21 **STEVE WINWOOD**
Arc Of A Diver
Island

22 **EDDIE RABBITT**
Horizon
Elektra

23 **YARBROUGH AND PEOPLES**
The Two Of Us
Mercury

24 **DIRE STRAITS**
Making Movies
Warner Bros.

25 **OUTLAWS**
Ghost Riders
Arista

26 **THE CLASH**
Sandinista
Epic

27 **ROD STEWART**
Foolish Behaviour
Warner Bros.

28 **EAGLES**
Eagles Live
Asylum

29 **THE DOORS**
Greatest Hits
Elektra

30 **ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS**
Trust
Columbia

31 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.**
Winelight
Elektra

32 **THE WHISPERS**
Imagination
Solar

33 **BOZ SCAGGS**
Hits
Columbia

34 **EMMYLOU HARRIS**
Evangeline
Warner Bros.

35 **DELBERT McCLINTON**
The Jealous Kind
Capitol/MSS

36 **RONNIE MILSAP**
Greatest Hits
RCA

37 **AIR SUPPLY**
Lost In Love
Arista

38 **FLEETWOOD MAC**
Live
Warner Bros.

39 **APRIL WINE**
The Nature Of The Beast
Capitol

40 **MARVIN GAYE**
In Our Lifetime
Tamla

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING MARCH 14, 1981

1 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

2 **FACE VALUE**
Phil Collins
Virgin

3 **THE JAZZ SINGER**
Neil Diamond
Capitol

4 **VIENNA**
Ultravox
Chrysalis

5 **JOURNEY TO GLORY**
Spandau Ballet
Reformation/Chrysalis

6 **VERY BEST OF RITA COOLIDGE**
A&M

7 **DOUBLE FANTASY**
John Lennon & Yoko Ono
Geffen

8 **DANCE CRAZE**
Soundtrack
2-Tone

9 **DIFFICULT TO CURE**
Rainbow
Polydor

10 **STRAY CATS**
Stray Cats
Arista

11 **MAKING MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

12 **GUILTY**
Barbra Streisand
CBS

13 **MAKING PICTURES**
Rush
Mercury

14 **MANILOW MAGIC**
Barry Manilow
Arista

15 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

16 **DIRK WEARS WHITE SOX**
Adam & Ants
Do It

17 **SOUTHERN FREEEZ**
Southern Freeez
Beggars Banquet

18 **ABSOLUTELY**
Madness
Stiff

19 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Warner Bros.

20 **KILLERS**
Iron Maiden
EMI

21 **REMAIN IN LIGHT**
Talking Heads
Sire

22 **ANOTHER TICKET**
Eric Clapton
RSO

23 **THE VERY BEST OF DAVID BOWIE**
K-tel

24 **SKY 2**
Sky
Ariola

25 **VISAGE**
Visage
Polydor

26 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

27 **BARRY**
Barry Manilow
Arista

28 **POINT OF ENTRY**
Judas Priest
CBS

29 **WE'LL BRING THE HOUSE DOWN**
Slade
Cheapskate

30 **20 GOLDEN GREATS**
Al Jolson
MCA

31 **FLESH & BLOOD**
Roxy Music
Polydor

32 **SOUND AFFECTS**
Jam
Polydor

33 **GUITAR MAN**
Elvis Presley
RCA

34 **ARC OF A DIVER**
Stevie Winwood
Island

35 **GREATEST HITS**
Dr. Hook
Capitol

36 **KILIMANJARO**
Teardrop, Explodes
Mercury

37 **IMAGINE**
John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band
Parlophone

38 **TOYAH TOYAH TOYAH**
Toyah
Safari

39 **SIGNING OFF**
UB40
Graduate

40 **BAT OUT HELL**
Meat Loaf
Cleveland Int'l/CBS

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING MARCH 28, 1981

1 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

2 **STYX**
Paradise Theater
A&M

3 **RUSH**
Moving Pictures
Mercury

4 **JOHN LENNON/YOKO ONO**
Double Fantasy
Geffen

5 **NEIL DIAMOND**
The Jazz Singer
Capitol

6 **STEVE WINWOOD**
Arc Of A Diver
Island

7 **THE POLICE**
Zenyatta Mondatta
A&M

8 **PAT BENATAR**
Crimes Of Passion
Chrysalis

9 **JOURNEY**
Captured
Columbia

10 **BARBRA STREISAND**
Guilty
Columbia

11 **DOLLY PARTON**
9 To 5 and Odd Jobs
RCA

12 **BLONDIE**
Autoamerican
Chrysalis

13 **AC/DC**
Back In Black
Atlantic

14 **KENNY ROGERS**
Greatest Hits
Liberty

15 **KOOL & THE GANG**
Celebrate
De-Lite

16 **YARBROUGH AND PEOPLES**
The Two Of Us
Mercury

17 **ERIC CLAPTON**
Another Ticket
RSO

18 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.**
Winelight
Elektra

19 **EDDIE RABBITT**
Horizon
Elektra

20 **THE GAP BAND**
III
Mercury

21 **JAMES TAYLOR**
Dad Loves His Work
Columbia

22 **EMMYLOU HARRIS**
Evangeline
Warner Bros.

23 **THE WHISPERS**
Imagination
Solar

24 **STEVIE WONDER**
Hotter Than July
Tamla

25 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

26 **STEELY DAN**
Gaucho
MCA

27 **ABBA**
Super Trouper
Atlantic

28 **APRIL WINE**
The Nature Of The Beast
Capitol

29 **LAKESIDE**
Fantastic Voyage
Solar

30 **DON McLEAN**
Chain Lightning
Millennium

31 **JIMMY BUFFETT**
Coconut Telegraph
MCA

32 **THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT**
The Turn Of A Friendly Card
Arista

33 **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**
The River
Columbia

34 **.38 SPECIAL**
Wild Eyed Southern Boys
A&M

35 **DIANA ROSS**
To Love Again
Motown

36 **WILLIE NELSON**
Somewhere Over The Rainbow
Columbia

37 **TOM BROWNE**
Magic
Arista/GRP

38 **TIERRA**
City Nights
Boardwalk

39 **LOVERBOY**
Loverboy
Columbia

40 **SHALAMAR**
Three For Love
Solar

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING APRIL 18, 1981

1 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

2 **COME AND GET IT**
Whitesnake
Liberty

3 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

4 **THIS OLD HOUSE**
Shakin' Stevens
Epic

5 **SKY 3**
Sky
Ariola

6 **THE JAZZ SINGER**
Neil Diamond
Capitol

7 **MAKING MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

8 **INTUITION**
Linx
Chrysalis

9 **FACE VALUE**
Phil Collins
Virgin

10 **MANILOW MAGIC**
Barry Manilow
Arista

11 **FACE DANCERS**
Who
Polydor

12 **FLOWERS OF ROMANCE**
Public Image Ltd.
Virgin

13 **NEVER TOO LATE**
Status Quo
Vertigo

14 **JOURNEY TO GLORY**
Spandau Ballet
Reformation/Chrysalis

15 **DOUBLE FANTASY**
John Lennon & Yoko Ono
Geffen

16 **FROM THE TEAROOMS**
Landscape
RCA

17 **THE ADVENTURES OF THIN LIZZY**
Thin Lizzy
Vertigo

18 **FUN IN SPACE**
Roger Taylor
EMI

19 **VIENNA**
Ultravox
Chrysalis

20 **BARRY**
Barry Manilow
Arista

21 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Warner Bros.

22 **VISAGE**
Visage
Polydor

23 **THE VERY BEST OF RITA COOLIDGE**
A&M

24 **ARC OF A DIVER**
Steve Winwood
Island

25 **ROLL ON**
Various
Polystar

26 **TO LOVE AGAIN**
Diana Ross
Motown

27 **GREATEST HITS VOL. 3**
Cockney Rejects
Zonophone

28 **FLESH & BLOOD**
Roxy Music
Polydor

29 **THE ROGER WHITTAKER ALBUM**
K-tel

30 **GUILTY**
Barbra Streisand
CBS

31 **BAT OUT OF HELL**
Meat Loaf
Epic/Cleveland Intl.

32 **DIFFICULT TO CURE**
Rainbow
Polydor

33 **SPELLBOUND**
Tygers of Pan Tang
MCA

34 **DANCE CRAZE**
Soundtrack
2-Tone

35 **DIRK WEARS WHITE SOCKS**
Adam & Ants
Do It

36 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

37 **TWANGIN'**
Dave Edmunds
Swan Song

38 **THE DUDE**
Quincy Jones
A&M

39 **CONCERT FOR KAMPUCHEA**
Various
Atlantic

40 **POTATO LAND**
Spirit
Beggars Banquet

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING APRIL 25, 1981

1 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

2 **STYX**
Paradise Theater
A&M

3 **STEVE WINWOOD**
Arc Of A Diver
Island

4 **THE WHO**
Face Dances
Warner Bros.

5 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.**
Winelight
Elektra

6 **RUSH**
Moving Pictures
Mercury

7 **ERIC CLAPTON**
Another Ticket
RSO

8 **THE POLICE**
Zenyatta Mondatta
A&M

9 **JOHN LENNON/YOKO ONO**
Double Fantasy
Geffen

10 **NEIL DIAMOND**
The Jazz Singer
Capitol

11 **JAMES TAYLOR**
Dad Loves His Work
Columbia

12 **BLONDIE**
Autoamerican
Chrysalis

13 **PAT BENATAR**
Crimes Of Passion
Chrysalis

14 **KENNY ROGERS**
Greatest Hits
Liberty

15 **THE ROLLING STONES**
Sucking In The Seventies
Rolling Stones

16 **AC/DC**
Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap
Atlantic

17 **SMOKEY ROBINSON**
Being With You
Tamla

18 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

19 **BARBRA STREISAND**
Guilty
Columbia

20 **LOVERBOY**
Loverboy
Columbia

21 **PHIL COLLINS**
Face Value
Atlantic

22 **QUINCY JONES**
The Dude
A&M

23 **AC/DC**
Back In Black
Atlantic

24 **THE GAP BAND**
III
Mercury

25 **.38 SPECIAL**
Wild Eyed Southern Boys
A&M

26 **JOURNEY**
Captured
Columbia

27 **DOLLY PARTON**
9 To 5 and Odd Jobs
RCA

28 **THE ISLEY BROTHERS**
Grand Slam
T-Neck

29 **APRIL WINE**
The Nature Of The Beast
Capitol

30 **DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES**
Voices
RCA

31 **WILLIE NELSON**
Somewhere Over The Rainbow
Columbia

32 **KOOL & THE GANG**
Celebrate
De-Lite

33 **DON McLEAN**
Chain Lightning
Millennium

34 **THE WHISPERS**
Imagination
Solar

35 **GINO VANNELLI**
Nightwalker
Arista

36 **YARBROUGH AND PEOPLES**
The Two Of Us
Mercury

37 **PAT TRAVERS**
Radio Active
Polydor

38 **ROBIN TROWER WITH JACK BRUCE AND BILL LORDON**
B.L.T.
Chrysalis

39 **JUICE NEWTON**
Juice
Capitol

40 **EMMYLOU HARRIS**
Evangeline
Warner Bros.

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING MAY 23, 1981

1 **STARS ON 45**
Star Sound
CBS

2 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

3 **WHA' HAPPEN**
Beat
Go Feet

4 **THIS OLD HOUSE**
Shakin' Stevens
Epic

5 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

6 **THE ADVENTURES OF THIN LIZZY**
Thin Lizzy
Vertigo

7 **QUIT DREAMING AND GET ON THE BEAM**
Bill Nelson
Mercury

8 **ROLL ON**
Various
Polystar

9 **CHARIOTS OF FIRE**
Vangelis
Polydor

10 **HI INFIDELITY**
REO Speedwagon
Epic

11 **BAD FOR GOOD**
Jim Steinman
CBS

12 **MAKING MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

13 **THE JAZZ SINGER**
Neil Diamond
Capitol

14 **DISCO DAZE & DISCO NUTS**
Various
Ronco

15 **COMPUTER WORLD**
Kraftwerk
EMI

16 **LONG DISTANCE VOYAGER**
Moody Blues

17 **STRAY CATS**
Stray Cats
Arista

18 **I AM A PHOENIX**
Judie Tzuke
Rocket

19 **COME AND GET IT**
Whitesnake
Liberty

20 **PUNKS NOT DEAD**
Exploited
Secret

21 **THE DUDE**
Quincy Jones
A&M

22 **POSITIVE TOUCH**
Undertones
Ardeck

23 **CHART BUSTERS 81**
Various
K-tel

24 **JOURNEY TO GLORY**
Spandau Ballet
Reformation/Chrysalis

25 **MANILOW MAGIC**
Barry Manilow
Arista

26 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Warner Bros.

27 **THIS IS ENNIO MORRICONE**
Ennio Morricone
EMI

28 **NOW**
Vic Damone
RCA

29 **MAKING WAVES**
Nolans
Epic

30 **TALK TALK TALK**
Psychedelic Furs
CBS

31 **SKY 3**
Sky
Ariola

32 **FACE VALUE**
Phil Collins
Virgin

33 **CHI MAI**
Ennio Morricone
BBC

34 **WINELIGHT**
Grover Washington
Elektra

35 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

36 **BAT OUT OF HELL**
Meat Loaf
Epic/Cleveland Intl.

37 **FUTURE SHOCK**
Gillan
Virgin

38 **TAKE MY TIME**
Sheena Easton
EMI

39 **SECRET COMBINATION**
Randy Crawford
Warner Bros.

40 **LIVING ORNAMENTS 1979-1980**
Gary Numan
Beggars Banquet

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING MAY 30, 1981

1 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

2 **STYX**
Paradise Theater
A&M

3 **AC/DC**
Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap
Atlantic

4 **STEVE WINWOOD**
Arc Of A Diver
Island

5 **RUSH**
Moving Pictures
Mercury

6 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.**
Winelight
Elektra

7 **KIM CARNES**
Mistaken Identity
EMI-America

8 **THE WHO**
Face Dances
Warner Bros.

9 **PHIL COLLINS**
Face Value
Atlantic

10 **TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS**
Hard Promises
Backstreet

11 **SMOKEY ROBINSON**
Being With You
Tamla

12 **SANTANA**
Zebop
Columbia

13 **LOVERBOY**
Loverboy
Columbia

14 **QUINCY JONES**
The Dude
A&M

15 **GINO VANNELLI**
Nightwalker
Arista

16 **KENNY ROGERS**
Greatest Hits
Liberty

17 **RAY PARKER JR. & RAYDIO**
A Woman Needs Love
Arista

18 **.38 SPECIAL**
Wild Eyed Southern Boys
A&M

19 **DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES**
Voices
RCA

20 **JOHN LENNON/YOKO ONO**
Double Fantasy
Geffen

21 **CHAKA KHAN**
What Cha' Gonna Do For Me
Warner Bros.

22 **ERIC CLAPTON**
Another Ticket
RSO

23 **NEIL DIAMOND**
The Jazz Singer
Capitol

24 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

25 **JAMES TAYLOR**
Dad Loves His Work
Columbia

26 **VAN HALEN**
Fair Warning
Warner Bros.

27 **SHEENA EASTON**
Sheena Easton
EMI-America

28 **AC/DC**
Back In Black
Atlantic

29 **JUICE NEWTON**
Juice
Capitol

30 **GARY U.S. BONDS**
Dedication
EMI-America

31 **ALABAMA**
Feels So Right
RCA

32 **JEFFERSON STARSHIP**
Modern Times
Grunt

33 **THE GAP BAND**
III
Mercury

34 **OZZY OSBOURNE**
Blizzard Of Ozz
Jet

35 **THE POLICE**
Zenyatta Mondatta
A&M

36 **A TASTE OF HONEY**
Twice As Sweet
Capitol

37 **JOHN COUGAR**
Nothin' Matters And What If It Did
Riva

38 **FRANKE & THE KNOCKOUTS**
Franke & The Knockouts
Millennium

39 **JUDAS PRIEST**
Point Of Entry
Columbia

40 **RICK JAMES**
Street Songs
Gordy

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING JUNE 20, 1981

1 **STARS ON 45**
Star Sound
CBS

2 **DISCO DAZE & DISCO NUTS**
Various
Ronco

3 **PRESENT ARMS**
UB40
Dep Intl.

4 **ANTHEM**
Toyah
Safari

5 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

6 **MAGNETIC FIELDS**
Jean Michael Jarre
Polydor

7 **THIS OLD HOUSE**
Shakin' Stevens
Epic

8 **THEMES**
Various
K-tel

9 **CHARIOTS OF FIRE**
Vangelis
Polydor

10 **FACE VALUE**
Phil Collins
Virgin

11 **LONG DISTANCE VOYAGER**
Moody Blues
Threshold

12 **HI INFIDELITY**
REO Speedwagon
Epic

13 **VIENNA**
Ultravox
Chrysalis

14 **SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND**
George Harrison
Dark Horse

15 **SECRET COMBINATION**
Randy Crawford
Warner Bros.

16 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

17 **MAKING MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

18 **THE FOX**
Elton John
Rocket

19 **EAST SIDE STORY**
Squeeze
A&M

20 **BAT OUT OF HELL**
Meat Loaf
Epic/Cleveland Intl.

21 **BAD FOR GOOD**
Jim Steinman
CBS

22 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

23 **WHA'APPEN**
Beat
Go Feet

24 **KILIMANJARO**
Teardrop Explodes
Mercury

25 **SKY 3**
Sky
Ariola

26 **MISTAKEN IDENTITY**
Kim Carnes
EMI America

27 **THE JAZZ SINGER**
Neil Diamond
Capitol

28 **THE DUDE**
Quincy Jones
A&M

29 **COME AND GET IT**
Whitesnake
Liberty

30 **MANILOW MAGIC**
Barry Manilow
Arista

31 **HEAVEN UP HERE**
Echo & Bunnymen
Korova

32 **I AM A PHOENIX**
Judie Tzuke
Rocket

33 **THE ADVENTURES OF THIN LIZZY**
Thin Lizzy
Vertigo

34 **BARRY**
Barry Manilow
Arista

35 **BREAKING GLASS**
Hazel O'Connor
A&M

36 **DIRK WEARS WHITE SOX**
Adam & Ants
Do It

37 **OFF THE WALL**
Michael Jackson
Epic

38 **BEING WITH YOU**
Smokey Robinson
Motown

39 **CAN'T GET ENOUGH**
Eddy Grant
Ice

40 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Warner Bros.

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING JUNE 27, 1981

1 **KIM CARNES**
Mistaken Identity
EMI-America

2 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

3 **AC/DC**
Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap
Atlantic

4 **STYX**
Paradise Theater
A&M

5 **VAN HALEN**
Fair Warning
Warner Bros.

6 **TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS**
Hard Promises
Backstreet

7 **MOODY BLUES**
Long Distance Voyager
Threshold

8 **PHIL COLLINS**
Face Value
Atlantic

9 **SANTANA**
Zebop
Columbia

10 **RUSH**
Moving Pictures
Mercury

11 **STEVE WINWOOD**
Arc Of A Diver
Island

12 **SMOKEY ROBINSON**
Being With You
Tamla

13 **RAY PARKER JR. & RAYDIO**
A Woman Needs Love
Arista

14 **STARS ON LONG PLAY**
Stars On Long Play
Radio Records

15 **RICK JAMES**
Street Songs
Gordy

16 **GEORGE HARRISON**
Somewhere In England
Dark Horse

17 **CHAKA KHAN**
What Cha' Gonna Do For Me
Warner Bros.

18 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

19 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.**
Winelight
Elektra

20 **.38 SPECIAL**
Wild Eyed Southern Boys
A&M

21 **ELTON JOHN**
The Fox
Geffen

22 **LOVERBOY**
Loverboy
Columbia

23 **GINO VANNELLI**
Nightwalker
Arista

24 **THE WHO**
Face Dances
Warner Bros.

25 **RICK SPRINGFIELD**
Working Class Dog
RCA

26 **QUINCY JONES**
The Dude
A&M

27 **JOE WALSH**
There Goes The Neighborhood
Asylum

28 **OZZY OSBOURNE**
Blizzard Of Ozz
Jet

29 **LEE RITENOUR**
Rit
Elektra

30 **STEPHANIE MILLS**
Stephanie
20th Century

31 **NEIL DIAMOND**
The Jazz Singer
Capitol

32 **ALABAMA**
Feels So Right
RCA

33 **ROSANNE CASH**
Seven Year Ache
Columbia

34 **STANLEY CLARKE/GEORGE DUKE**
The Clarke/Duke Project
Epic

35 **BILLY SQUIER**
Don't Say No
Capitol

36 **JEFFERSON STARSHIP**
Modern Times
Grunt

37 **GARY U.S. BONDS**
Dedication
EMI-America

38 **AIR SUPPLY**
The One That You Love
Arista

39 **FRANKE & THE KNOCKOUTS**
Franke & The Knockouts
Millennium

40 **DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES**
Voices
RCA

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING JULY 18, 1981

1 **LOVE SONGS**
Cliff Richard
EMI

2 **SECRET COMBINATION**
Randy Crawford
Warner Bros.

3 **KIM WILDE**
Kim Wilde
Rak

4 **STARS ON LONG PLAY**
Star Sound
CBS

5 **NO SLEEP 'TIL HAMMERSMITH**
Motorhead
Bronze

6 **DISCO DAZE & DISCO NUTS**
Various
Ronco

7 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

8 **ANTHEM**
Toyah
Safari

9 **PRESENT ARMS**
UB40
Dep Intl.

10 **DURAN DURAN**
Duran Duran
EMI

11 **HI INFIDELITY**
REO Speedwagon
Epic

12 **FACE VALUE**
Phil Collins
Virgin

13 **BAD FOR GOOD**
Jim Steinman
CBS

14 **BEST OF MICHAEL JACKSON**
Motown

15 **JUMPIN' JIVE**
Joe Jackson
A&M

16 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

17 **THE FRIENDS OF MR. CAIRO**
Jon & Vangelis
Polydor

18 **VIENNA**
Ultravox
Chrysalis

19 **CHARIOTS OF FIRE**
Vangelis
Polydor

20 **MAGNETIC FIELDS**
Jean Michael Jarre
Polydor

21 **JU-JU**
Siouxsie & Banshees
Polydor

22 **MAKING MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

23 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

24 **MADE IN AMERICA**
Carpenters
A&M

25 **BAT OUT OF HELL**
Meat Loaf
Epic/Cleveland Intl.

26 **THE DUDE**
Quincy Jones
A&M

27 **KILIMANJARO**
Teardrop Explodes
Mercury

28 **BEING WITH YOU**
Smokey Robinson
Motown

29 **I'VE GOT THE MELODY**
Odyssey
RCA

30 **WHA'PPEN**
Beat
Go Feet

31 **INTUITION**
Linx
Chrysalis

32 **THIS OLD HOUSE**
Shakin' Stevens
Epic

33 **NAH POO THE ART OF BLUFF**
Wah
Eternal Classic 1

34 **GUILTY**
Barbra Streisand
CBS

35 **1984**
Rick Wakeman
Charisma

36 **THE PARTY MIX ALBUM**
B52's
Island

37 **LONG DISTANCE VOYAGER**
Moody Blues
Threshold

38 **MARAUDER**
Blackfoot
Atco

39 **OFF THE WALL**
Michael Jackson
Epic

40 **ROCKS OF THE WORLD**
Third World
CBS

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING JULY 25, 1981

1 **MOODY BLUES**
Long Distance Voyager
Threshold

2 **KIM CARNES**
Mistaken Identity
EMI-America

3 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

4 **RICK JAMES**
Street Songs
Gordy

5 **TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS**
Hard Promises
Backstreet

6 **STYX**
Paradise Theater
A&M

7 **PHIL COLLINS**
Face Value
Atlantic

8 **KENNY ROGERS**
Share Your Love
Liberty

9 **STARS ON LONG PLAY**
Stars On Long Play
Radio Records

10 **SANTANA**
Zebop
Columbia

11 **AIR SUPPLY**
The One That You Love
Arista

12 **RUSH**
Moving Pictures
Mercury

13 **AC/DC**
Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap
Atlantic

14 **BILLY SQUIER**
Don't Say No
Capitol

15 **VAN HALEN**
Fair Warning
Warner Bros.

16 **RICK SPRINGFIELD**
Working Class Dog
RCA

17 **GEORGE HARRISON**
Somewhere In England
Dark Horse

18 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

19 **PAT BENATAR**
Precious Time
Chrysalis

20 **OAK RIDGE BOYS**
Fancy Free
MCA

21 **JOE WALSH**
There Goes The Neighborhood
Asylum

22 **OZZY OSBOURNE**
Blizzard Of Ozz
Jet

23 **STEVE WINWOOD**
Arc Of A Diver
Island

24 **RAY PARKER JR. & RAYDIO**
A Woman Needs Love
Arista

25 **THE COMMODORES**
In The Pocket
Motown

26 **FOREIGNER**
4
Atlantic

27 **ROSANNE CASH**
Seven Year Ache
Columbia

28 **DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES**
Voices
RCA

29 **ALABAMA**
Feels So Right
RCA

30 **MANHATTAN TRANSFER**
Mecca For Moderns
Atlantic

31 **POINTER SISTERS**
Black & White
Planet

32 **GRACE JONES**
Nightclubbing
Island

33 **STANLEY CLARKE/GEORGE DUKE**
The Clarke/Duke Project
Epic

34 **JEFFERSON STARSHIP**
Modern Times
Grunt

35 **TEENA MARIE**
It Must Be Magic
Gordy

36 **THE TUBES**
The Completion Backward Principle
Capitol

37 **GINO VANNELLI**
Nightwalker
Arista

38 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.**
Winelight
Elektra

39 **SMOKEY ROBINSON**
Being With You
Tamla

40 **LEE RITENOUR**
Rit
Elektra

BRITISH TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING AUGUST 15, 1981

1 **OFFICIAL BBC ALBUM OF THE ROYAL WEDDING**
BBC

2 **ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA**
Jet

3 **LOVE SONGS**
Cliff Richard
EMI

4 **DURAN DURAN**
Duran Duran
EMI

5 **SECRET COMBINATION**
Randy Crawford
Warner Bros.

6 **KOOKOO**
Debbie Harry
Chrysalis

7 **PRETENDERS II**
Pretenders
Real

8 **KIM WILDE**
Kim Wilde
Rak

9 **HI INFIDELITY**
REO Speedwagon
Epic

10 **ROCK CLASSICS**
Lso/Royal Chorale Society
K-tel

11 **BELLA DONNA**
Stevie Nicks
WEA

12 **STARS ON LONG PLAY**
Star Sound
CBS

13 **HOTTER THAN JULY**
Stevie Wonder
Motown

14 **PRESENT ARMS**
UB40
Dep Int'l

15 **NO SLEEP 'TIL HAMMERSMITH**
Motorhead
Bronze

16 **CATS**
Various
Polydor

17 **BAT OUT OF HELL**
Meat Loaf
Epic/Cleveland Int'l

18 **THIS OLD HOUSE**
Shakin' Stevens
Epic

19 **KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER**
Adam & Ants
CBS

20 **BEST OF MICHAEL JACKSON**
Motown

21 **BUCKS FIZZ**
Bucks Fizz
RCA

22 **BAD FOR GOOD**
Jim Steinman
CBS

23 **DISCO DAZE & DISCO NUTS**
Various
Ronco

24 **MAKING MOVIES**
Dire Straits
Vertigo

25 **ANTHEM**
Toyah
Safari

26 **JOURNEY TO GLORY**
Spandau Ballet
Reformation

27 **CHARIOTS OF FIRE**
Vangelis
Polydor

28 **JUMPIN' JIVE**
Joe Jackson
A&M

29 **VIENNA**
Ultravox
Chrysalis

30 **THE RIVER**
Bruce Springsteen
CBS

31 **FACE VALUE**
Phil Collins
Virgin

32 **JU JU**
Siouxsie & Banshees
Polydor

33 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Warner Bros.

34 **20 GOLDEN GREATS**
Beach Boys
Capitol

35 **EAST SIDE STORY**
Squeeze
A&M

36 **LONG DISTANCE VOYAGER**
Moody Blues
Threshold

37 **PIRATES**
Rickie Lee Jones
Warner Bros.

38 **STARTRAX CLUB DISCO**
Various
Picksy

39 **MAGNETIC FIELDS**
Jean Michael Jarre
Polydor

40 **RUMOURS**
Fleetwood Mac
Warner Bros.

AMERICAN TOP 40 ALBUMS

WEEK ENDING AUGUST 22, 1981

1 **FOREIGNER**
4
Atlantic

2 **PAT BENATAR**
Precious Time
Chrysalis

3 **STEVIE NICKS**
Bella Donna
Modern Records

4 **JOURNEY**
Escape
Columbia

5 **MOODY BLUES**
Long Distance Voyager
Threshold

6 **KENNY ROGERS**
Share Your Love
Liberty

7 **BILLY SQUIER**
Don't Say No
Capitol

8 **RICK JAMES**
Street Songs
Gordy

9 **RICK SPRINGFIELD**
Working Class Dog
RCA

10 **AIR SUPPLY**
The One That You Love
Arista

11 **REO SPEEDWAGON**
Hi Infidelity
Epic

12 **RICKIE LEE JONES**
Pirates
Warner Bros.

13 **TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS**
Hard Promises
Backstreet

14 **THE COMMODORES**
In The Pocket
Motown

15 **POINTER SISTERS**
Black & White
Planet

16 **KIM CARNES**
Mistaken Identity
EMI-America

17 **OAK RIDGE BOYS**
Fancy Free
MCA

18 **STYX**
Paradise Theater
A&M

19 **ALABAMA**
Feels So Right
RCA

20 **SOUNDTRACK**
Endless Love
Mercury

21 **PHIL COLLINS**
Face Value
Atlantic

22 **MANHATTAN TRANSFER**
Mecca For Moderns
Atlantic

23 **TEENA MARIE**
It Must Be Magic
Gordy

24 **DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES**
Voices
RCA

25 **SANTANA**
Zebop
Columbia

26 **OZZY OSBOURNE**
Blizzard Of Ozz
Jet

27 **BLUE OYSTER CULT**
Fire Of Unknown Origin
Columbia

28 **RUSH**
Moving Pictures
Mercury

29 **JEFFERSON STARSHIP**
Modern Times
Grunt

30 **AC/DC**
Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap
Atlantic

31 **JUICE NEWTON**
Juice
Capitol

32 **Z Z TOP**
El Loco
Warner Bros.

33 **GREG KIHN**
Rockihnroll
Beserkley

34 **MAZE FEATURING FRANKIE BEVERLY**
Live In New Orleans
Capitol

35 **MARTY BALIN**
Balin
EMI-America

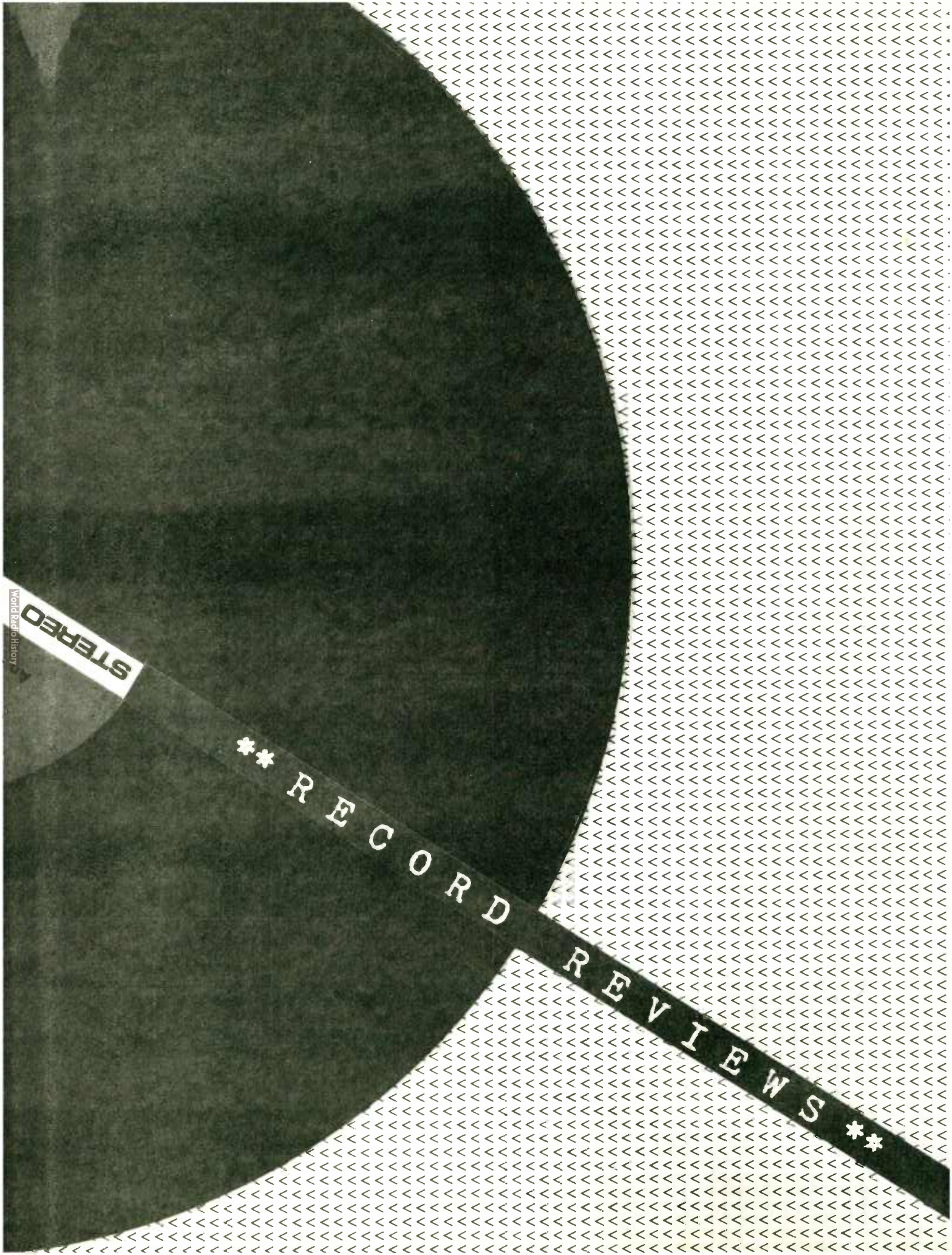
36 **EVELYN KING**
I'm In Love
RCA

37 **JOHN SCHNEIDER**
Now Or Never
Scotti Bros.

38 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS**
Christopher Cross
Warner Bros.

39 **PABLO CRUISE**
Reflector
A&M

40 **E.L.O.**
Time
Jet



JOHN LENNON
and YOKO ONO
Double Fantasy
(Geffen)

It's easy to see *Double Fantasy* as the beginning of a musical/aesthetic renaissance for Lennon when you listen to the album and realize what a well-focused and coherent expression of his cooperative venture with Yoko Ono the record is. Lennon's previous collaborations with Yoko were dense and impenetrable records—it seemed that his best solo albums were the ones that separated him most from Yoko, where she was perhaps the focus of his love but not a direct partner in the musical process. But *Double Fantasy* alternates songs by John and Yoko all through the record in such a way that their visions blend together to provide a coherent whole. In fact, Yoko's songs *amplify* Lennon's—her writing and performance have taken on a maturity and sense of self that makes her, if not as good a writer as John, a very effective counterpoint to his persona.

Double Fantasy succeeds in elevating Lennon's concern with domesticity to a work of art in itself. The album is Lennon's stated intent to take his own life seriously, the life of getting to know his kid, making meals and keeping house, loving Yoko—*not* the life of being a rock 'n' roll star. He is attempting to make commonplace life sacred, just as great as ambition as being a Beatle. What's remarkable isn't that he's attempting this—after all, there was no economic pressure on him to keep at being John Lennon Superstar—but that he *pulled it off*. The songs are beautiful, the performance as real and resonant as his best work on previous solo albums. The production sound of "Starting Over" is as lush and beautiful as his characteristic post-"Strawberry Fields Forever" recording sound with the Beatles. "Dear Yoko" compares very favorably to the somewhat similar "Oh Yoko" from *Imagine*. But the real triumph is "Watching the Wheels," in which Lennon makes the statement about his life decision with the same chilling purpose and exacting logic that he brought to his Beatles kiss-offs "Working Class Hero" and "The Dream Is Over."

The best example of the felicitous collaboration between John and Yoko on this album comes when Lennon's pained and powerful lament (sounds like the intense pain on "Mother" from his first solo outing) "I'm Losing You" segues via some chilling sound effects into Yoko's answer, "I'm Moving On." The combination is astonishing in its power, perhaps more so because Yoko so obviously holds her own in John's medium, hypnotic, medium-tempo rock 'n' roll. This is far from the Yoko Ono who provided an easy target for cynical critics in her *Fly* days, the screeching Jap whom many blamed for breaking up the Beatles. This is a woman as talented (if not more so) as new-wave stars like Nina Hagen, Debbie Harry and Chrissie Hynde. After all, Yoko had the guts to do this stuff a decade before new wave made it fashionable, and she took her lumps stoically, perhaps even in the knowledge that someday her vision would be proved useful. When her characteristic broken-voiced squeals punctuate the end of the song, it's a genuinely expressive moment that somehow climaxes the record.

Perhaps the most crushing thing about the timing of Lennon's death after the release of this record is how much his songs here are filled with love and an appreciation of life. "Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)," written to his son Sean, never fails to generate tears. Lennon's hymn to life is so far removed from the cruel fate of an assassin's bullet it makes you curse the fates that brought down a man so full of love in the prime of his life. In the song, he plays the strong father brushing away his son's nightmare fears (what monsters did Sean see in that dream?) and, cluckingly solicitous of his safety, advising him to hold Daddy's hand as he crosses the street. Then comes the line that so well reflects Lennon's genius and holds so much poignance that it's impossible to hear without breaking down: *Life is what happens to you/While you're busy/Making other plans.*

Whatever John Lennon's other plans were, it's now left for us to carry them out.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
The River
(Columbia)

If *Born To Run* was escaping from the pain and *Darkness At The End Of Town* was acknowledging it, then *The River* is living with the pain—accepting the terrible yet magnificent realization that the only way out involves plunging all the way in. Shedding the protective coating of stale dreams and illusions, Springsteen confronts his demons by striding headlong into the teeth of reality—unsure of the

eventual outcome, but somehow aware that facing the Medusa is both inevitable and necessary. The first time around, the album seems opaque and disappointing. If you're expecting to be swept off your feet by a *Born To Run* or socked in the jaw by a *Darkness*, forget it. There's no wall of sound heralding the exaltation and power of innocence, no banks of overdubbed guitars or stirring orchestrations. There are no glockenspiels in Purgatory. The sound is open and loose, suggesting, say, an updated *Exile on Mainstreet* or *Highway 61*, with Bruce and Steve's jangling guitars and Danny Federici's soulful Hammond dominating the mix. The relatively thin, skeletal textures don't come out and grab you. Instead, they lure you even futher onwards until, like Alice through the looking glass, you tumble in. By force of habit we tend to seek out the hard stuff first, and there are plenty of raucous rockers like "Crush on You," "Cadillac Ranch" and "Ramrod" to satisfy those cravings, but don't try to use

them as your port of entry. The ballads are the key here, particularly the four that end each side of the record. The last track, "Wreck On the Highway," is the Alpha and the Omega — both the overture and capstone of the album. While recollecting a road accident our protagonist confronts his own mortality, and an age of innocence is shattered in the realization that Thunder Road and the Fast Lane are one and the same. Once this Pandora's box has been opened and this first, ultimate limitation acknowledged, all other myths and dreams become fair game. Marriage, romance, friendship, identity — all must stand trial, with the bottom line expressed best by a line from Robert Fripp's *Exposure*, "It is impossible to achieve the aim without suffering." The Price You Pay," as the title implies, is the clearest and most stoic espousal of this philosophy, with its deliberate musical and lyrical references to "The Promised Land" and its simple yet courageous message: gravity exists. For those who still haven't caught on to what all the car and highway symbolism is all about there's "Stolen Car," a haunting ballad, framed by Federici's spectral organ, that reveals all. Road machines = dreams = vision = transcendence. *Voila.* Okay, so why is it a *stolen* car? Why does he want to get caught? Why indeed? Don't get me wrong, *The River* is by no means a cry of despair or admission of defeat. It's a work of uncommon courage — an open confrontation with the fears, failures, and insecurities that we all try to shove under the carpet of our waking consciousness. Whatever muse infuses Springsteen with his extraordinary creativity has also shown him that coming to grips with his limitations is not just the best way to deal with reality, it's the *only* way. *I would rather feel the pain inside/than know the emptiness your heart must hide.* Though the loss of innocence also means a loss of youthful vitality (for the moment, anyway), there's the ineffable faith that on the other side of this dark but necessary passage there waits a victory that's worth the struggle. And a new beginning. *Someday these childish dreams must end/to become a man and grow up to dream again/Now I believe in the end.* It's the only road for an artist of his stature. Or for any of us.

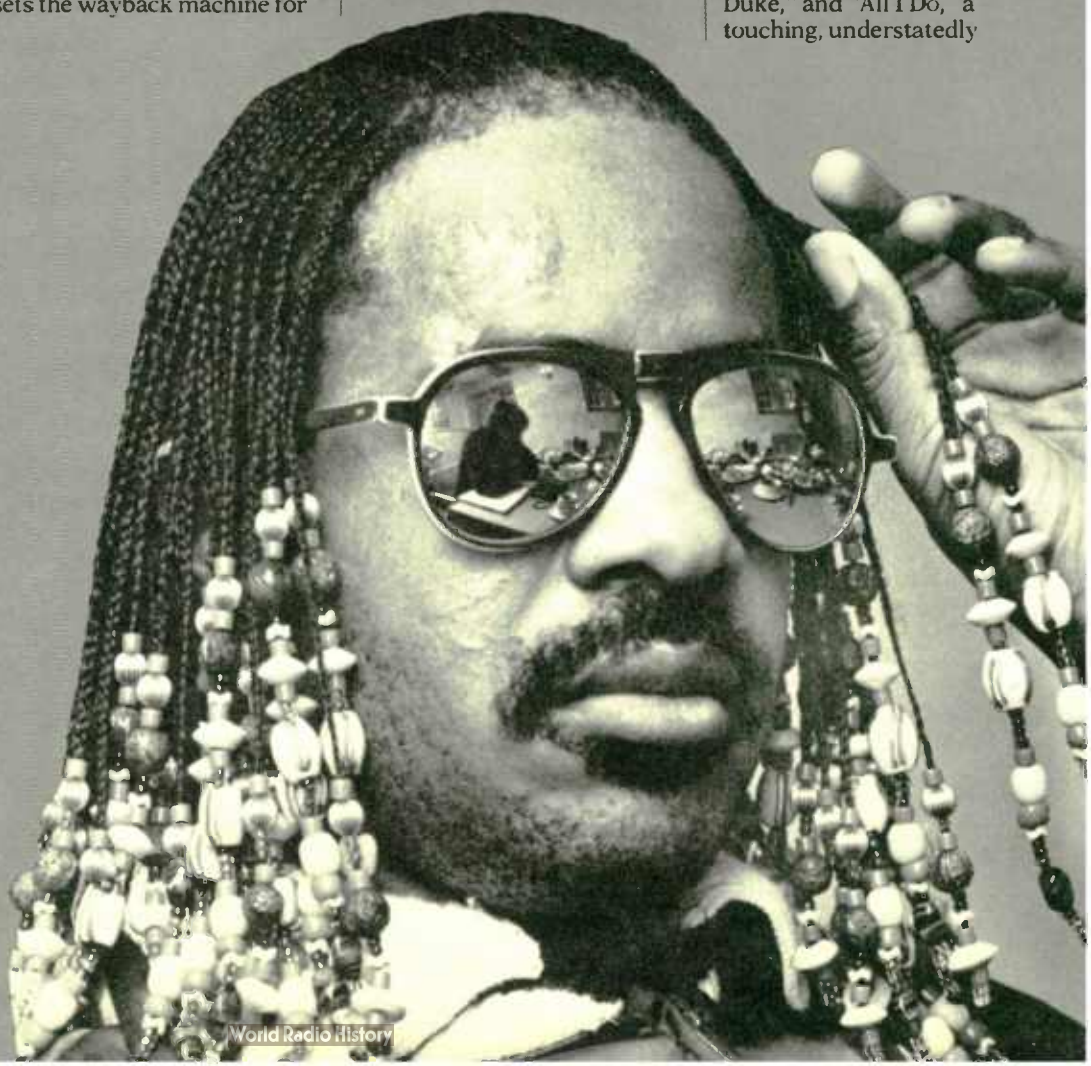
—Vic Garbarini

STEVIE WONDER
Hotter Than July
(Tamla)

Never mind the flora and fauna—here's the funk, mister. On his seventh album since he came of musical age in 1972 with the one man show *Music of My Mind*, Stevie Wonder sets the wayback machine for his mid-'70s glory days of *Innervisions* and *Fulfillingness' First Finale* to make his most compelling, irresistably danceable, and completely satisfying record in—for Wonder—too many a moon. No talking to the plants while they talk back; no two-and-a-half record sets spent in search of the lost chord in the key of life. *Hotter Than July* is just that—24-carat-Stevie, his indelible musical and spiritual stamp pressed into a winning ten-song program of discophonic dance tracks, sassy R&B struts, and stunning ballads.

It is probably approaching sacrilege as well as hyperbole to suggest that *Hotter Than July* is like a visit from a long lost (well, maybe not *that* long) friend. But there is something a bit disconcerting about the way the press, radio and fans have received this album. Though hardly flawless, both *Songs in the Key of Life* and *Journey Through the Secret Life of Plants* were earnest and often successful attempts to redefine the boundaries of both soul and modern pop, to go where no R&B artist had ever gone before. But the collective sigh of relief that has greeted *Hotter Than July* suggests that Wonder's public, in general, merely tolerated those records, particularly *Plants*, as the eccentricities to be expected of genius. *Hotter Than July* is his return to classic form and that is certainly worth celebrating.

But for all its charms *Hotter Than July* is actually a rather conservative record. There is nothing here that you have not already heard in some other form or crafty combination of *Talking Book*, *Innervisions*, or *Fulfillingness' First Finale*. "Cash in Your Face" is a thinly disguised rewrite of "Superstition" with a slightly less tempestuous beat bolstered by the defiantly open bitterness in the lyrics (a case of racial discrimination) and Wonder's sneering Sly Stone-like vocal. Other deja vus include "Do Like You," which hearkens back to the rousing block party fervor of "Sir Duke," and "All I Do," a touching, understatedly



T. VAN DUGEREN/RETNA

romantic hybrid of the cool samba style that opens *Music of My Mind's* "Superwoman" and the loping untempo enthusiasm of "Isn't She Lovely" from *Songs in the Key of Life.*

The album centerpiece "Master Blaster (Jammin')," from whence cometh the album title, is a significant improvement over Wonder's previous, rather dilettantish experiment with reggae in "Boogie On Reggae Woman." Though he is clearly inspired enough by Bob Marley to cop a few licks from Marley's "Jamming" and then pay his respects to him in the song, Wonder has orchestrated here his own unique marriage between the rocker's beat and the brisk funky chops of the Wonderlove band. You can't help but wonder, though, just how funky things could have gotten if Wailers Aston and Carlton Barett had been behind this beat.

And the potential hits just keep on comin'—the uplifting funk 'n' roll of "I Ain't Gonna Stand For It" with its twin guitar riffing and Hank DeVito's shimmering pedal steel guitar; "As If You Read My Mind," a slice of Latino chunka-chunka rhythm; the fragile beauty of the ballads "Rocket Love" and "Lately." Wonder is in consistently fine voice and while he is supported here by a cast of several players and singers in contrast to his usual solo extravangazas, it is Wonder's words, music, spirit, and inner vision that defines not only his sound but his place in the Parthenon of pop.

The music does not come without a message. The innversleeve is a heated yet eloquent pitch by Wonder to declare January 15 Martin Luther King's birthday, a national holiday and he even gets the party rolling with the song "Happy Birthday." But *Hotter Than July* is an album meant to be enjoyed, danced to, whistled with—not just respected as another work of genius. In the Stevie Wonder cannon, *Hotter Than July* is nothing new. It is, however, what he does best. That should be recommendation enough.

—David Fricke

PHOEBE SNOW
Rock Away
(Mirage)

Phoebe Snow was usually too artful and eccentric for her own good. Her own songs tended to be uninvolving exercises in sensitivity and self-congratulatory vulnerability. Within the framework of gentle, detached melodies that "tastefully" acknowledged both urban folk and nightclub jazz influences, her outlook seemed to be that life and love are *really unfair* and *really painful* and that happiness exists only alongside (or within) the pain. An intelligent lyricist, Snow was expert at emotional detailing, but the overriding gloom of songs like "Poetry Man" (remember, the guy's married), "I Don't Want The Night To End" (talk about looking for misery), and "Cash In" (*Things must have a price, play it as it lays*) wasn't very appealing. Then, too, her quirky, quavering delivery and her studied posture obscured her real potential as a soulful, gospel-touched belter. "Gone At Last," with Paul Simon, was one of her finer performances —and outside material, however clever or risky the choice (Gershwin, "Let The Good Times Roll"), lost its distinction.

Snow's first album in some time, the aptly titled *Rock Away*, is a major suprise. Teaming Greg Ladanyi (Warren Zevon, Jackson Browne) and Richie Cannata (Billy Joel's sax player) as producers might have resulted in some confusion of focus—L.A. meets L.I., but Snow has never sounded better or more relaxed about what she's doing. Lots of familiar studio session stars from both coasts work up an essentially "Jackson Browne-rock-sound" (energetic but nothing out of hand), then everyone tampers with it enough to reflect the volatile combination of players, producers, and artist. Snow includes only three original songs—two are, 'tis true, sensitive; her seven interpretations of others' material evidence a rock convert's enthusiastic desire to embrace a wide range of possibilities. Songs by Carolyne Mas, Allen Toussaint, Bob Dylan, a crisp, down home reading of "Gasoline Alley"—each calls for certain special ingredients to be thrown into the bubbling, sometimes crackling mixture. "Have Mercy" is unexceptional and Dylan's "I Believe In You" is treated too seriously, but mostly Snow respects the songs' origins and gets off on her shifting surroundings. Her singing is looser and rougher than in the past; as she responds to Richie Cannata's sax solos and plenty of fine guitar work, she hits some bad notes and some really good ones, and it's a pleasure to realize that fun and a "rocking good time" are finally far more important to Snow than "tastefulness" and "thoughtfulness." *RockAway* is a treat.—*Jim Feldman*

LITTLE FEAT
Hoy Hoy
(Warner Brothers)

This album closes out the career of a band many rock fans will swear was the best American group of the '70s. Led by the brilliant singing, songwriting and guitar playing of the late Lowell George, Little Feat was a band that defied genres—blues, boggie, country & western, southern rock—they encompassed a range of styles as wide as the continent.

The band's eclecticism was a drawback, though, because no two Little Feat albums were the same. Ironically, it took this retrospective LP to assemble all the facets of this extraordinary outfit in one place. The production was a painstaking labor of love by the band's keyboardist, Bill Payne, who unearthed the poignant Lowell George solo version of "Rocket In My Pocket" to begin the record on a bittersweet. elegaic note.

Little Feat was at its best in front of an audience, and the double live set, *Waiting For Columbus*, failed to document all aspects of the band's live sound, so the live tracks included here offer a valuable piece of history. From a stirring 1973 version of "Two Trains" through the shuffling funk of "Rock and Roll Doctor" and "Skin It Back" to the no-holds-barred jam of "The Fan" to the sultry swing of "Red Streamliner," the live Feat exploits are well represented.

Several Lowell George numbers that have never been heard before are included here, going back a decade for the hilarious version of the Lieber-Stoller song "Framed" and half that time for a beautiful cover of Hank Williams' "Lonesome Whistle." The most startling leftover is a powerful gospel/blues, "China White," which George apparently cut for his solo album then decided not to include.

The record also presents two Payne songs never released by the band, "Gringo" and "Front Page News," and a kind of tribute to George by Feat's other guitarist, Paul Barrere, "Over the Edge." Linda Ronstadt's version of George's depression anthem, "All That You Dream," recorded with an all-star backing group at the Lowell George memorial concert, segues into a strutting reprise of "Feets Don't Fail Me Now" as the album closes.

—John Swenson

DIRE STRAITS
Making Movies
(Warner)

Dire Straits recorded two albums in 1978 and spent 1979 touring the world as those two albums became enormously popular. After a year and a half of success, Mark Knopfler, Pick Withers, and John Illsley returned to the studio to produce *Making Movies*, an album so remarkable that it makes their earlier successes sound like warm-ups.

E Street Band pianist Roy Bittan plays keyboard throughout, and the record was produced by Knopfler and Jimmy Iovine. Each of these three has a distinctive signature style, and the album's opening (a piano flourish that is pure Bittan into an explosion of sound that is pure Iovine into the unmistakable Knopfler/Straits guitar groove) declares that this combination of talents will push each other to create a whole that extends our perception of each.

Singer/songwriter/guitarist Knopfler has never sounded so enthusiastic on record, and it seems to inspire everyone else. Withers' remarkable drumming, though always held back to serve the song, is finally given a taste of prominance it deserves. Even when Iovine has boosted the toms and bass drum, adding echo to achieve his famous rifleshot drum sound, one can hear, way back in the mix, Withers working the hi-hat or cymbals to add subtle extra touches.

The second side extends Dire Straits' territory to hard rock and even German cabaret, but it's the three songs on side one ("Tunnel of Love," "Romeo and Juliet," "Skateaway") that established Dire Straits as a band that has proved its place in rock's first rank.

Mark Knopfler has moved closer and closer to the heart of his vision. The mysterious women we glimpsed in his early songs have faces now and, like a lost love, they seem even more mystical in familiarity. *Making Movies* is the extension of the two earlier Dire Straits albums, but it is more than that. *Making Movies* is the album that Bruce Springsteen might have made after *E Street Shuffle* had he not moved toward the hard rock of *Born to Run*. Like early Springsteen, Knopfler has placed his star-crossed lovers in a nocturnal world of amusement parks, night trains, and urban balconies. Love is fleeting, but the memory of its triumphs gets him past the heartbreak of its loss. For all his worldliness, Knopfler's heart is still opened. His Juliet may say he's just another old boyfriend, but his Romeo can't accept that. He believes that a true love really must be eternal. Mark Knopfler's characters have never developed the intellectual defense mechanisms that block our emotional pain, and the beautiful purity of their vision is overwhelming.

—Bill Flanagan

Z Z TOP
El Loco
(Warner Brothers)

In 1976 ZZ Top pulled one of the most amazing disappearing acts in rock history. On the heels of the "Worldwide Texas Tour" which featured a stage fashioned in the shape of Texas and which earned close to 12 million dollars, the band suddenly and inexplicably retired at the height of its popularity.

Three years later the "little ole band from Texas" re-emerged with knee-length beards and an awesomely powerful LP, *Deguello*. The record marked a change in the group's musical direction from the amphetamine boogie that had characterized their earlier work to a slowed down, superfunk crawl. Now, *El Loco* completes the transition—this version of Z Z Top is virtually unrecognizable to fans who know the band from its early Cream/Hendrix blastoffs like *Rio Grande Mud*.

El Loco even includes an honest to god soft *ballad*, "Leila," with an exquisitely pretty melody and ringing steel guitar accompaniment. Before you start to worry that Top is bidding for some laid-back laurels, though, rest assured that the band is still burning a mean slow fire throughout this set. The heritage of T-Bone Walker and the Texas blues is emerging as they ease down on the crank and concentrate on the backbeat. On "Don't Tease Me" Billy Gibbons wrings fat rhythm & blues guitar lines over the smooth and supple bass/drum patterns turned out by Dusty Hill and Frank Beard. T-Bone himself would sweat to hear Gibbons' incredibly taut solo on "It's So Hard."

Though the rhythms are sly, *El Loco* is not without uptempo stompers like the irresistable "Tube Snake Boogie" and the heavier-than-Stones "Pearl Necklace," on which Gibbons revs up the fuzztone for one of his trademark raveup solos. Top is helping to bring the blues back to rock & roll in a big way.—*John Swenson*

ROOMFUL OF BLUES
Hot Little Mama
(Blue Flame)

Revivalist bands of all musical persuasions have flourished in bars and college concerts since the 60s, in many cases playing regularly for rabid coteries of longtime fans. Occasionally a band or singer has had either the charisma to transcend merely recycling a style and gain mass popularity—as with Asleep at the Wheel and George Thorogood and the Destroyers—or the sheer musical prowess to stun audiences with their flawlessly faithful and energetic reproductions, which is what the Widespread Depression Orchestra achieves with its Ellington/Basie set pieces. Roomful of Blues, a nine-piece unit from Rhode Island who've been playing continuously for ten years, achieve both goals simultaneously, and *Hot Little Mama* is not only the band's best representation on wax to date, but is also a great party record, featuring the kind of blues-shouting, horn-driven jump combo R&B that kept America wild and juking throughout the late 40s and early 50s.

The songs here are all old covers, some quite obscure to the classic R&B neophyte, but each player in ROB is such a master of the idiom on his instrument that the overall sound is every bit as punchy and focused as the original sources. Lead singer/tenor sax man Grego Piccolo belts out a song in the best Wynonie Harris-Bullmoose Jackson tradition and plays tenor with a full command over the growling effects that Red Prysock and Illinois Jacquet first popularized. Other strong soloists abound in this band: Rich Lataille's alto sax interpretations, especially his rendition of Johnny Hodge's "Jeep's Blues," are superb; Ronnie Horvath's T-Bone Walker-inspired guitar style blends beautifully with the horns; Doug James plays a wonderfully driving baritone sax; and trombonist Porky Cohen, a robust veteran of the big band era (having played with Artie Shaw, Lucky Millinder and Tommy Dorsey in their prime) is in fine form here, especially on a whip-cracking version of "Caravan." But the real key to this truly great band's sound is the very fact that it has been a working band for so long. Within its idiom, Roomful of Blues' swinging pulse and careful dynamics are awesome, while the horn section's phrasing and level of interpretation is on a par with all the great jump combo sections. And ultimately, these are musicians who fully understand that for all the

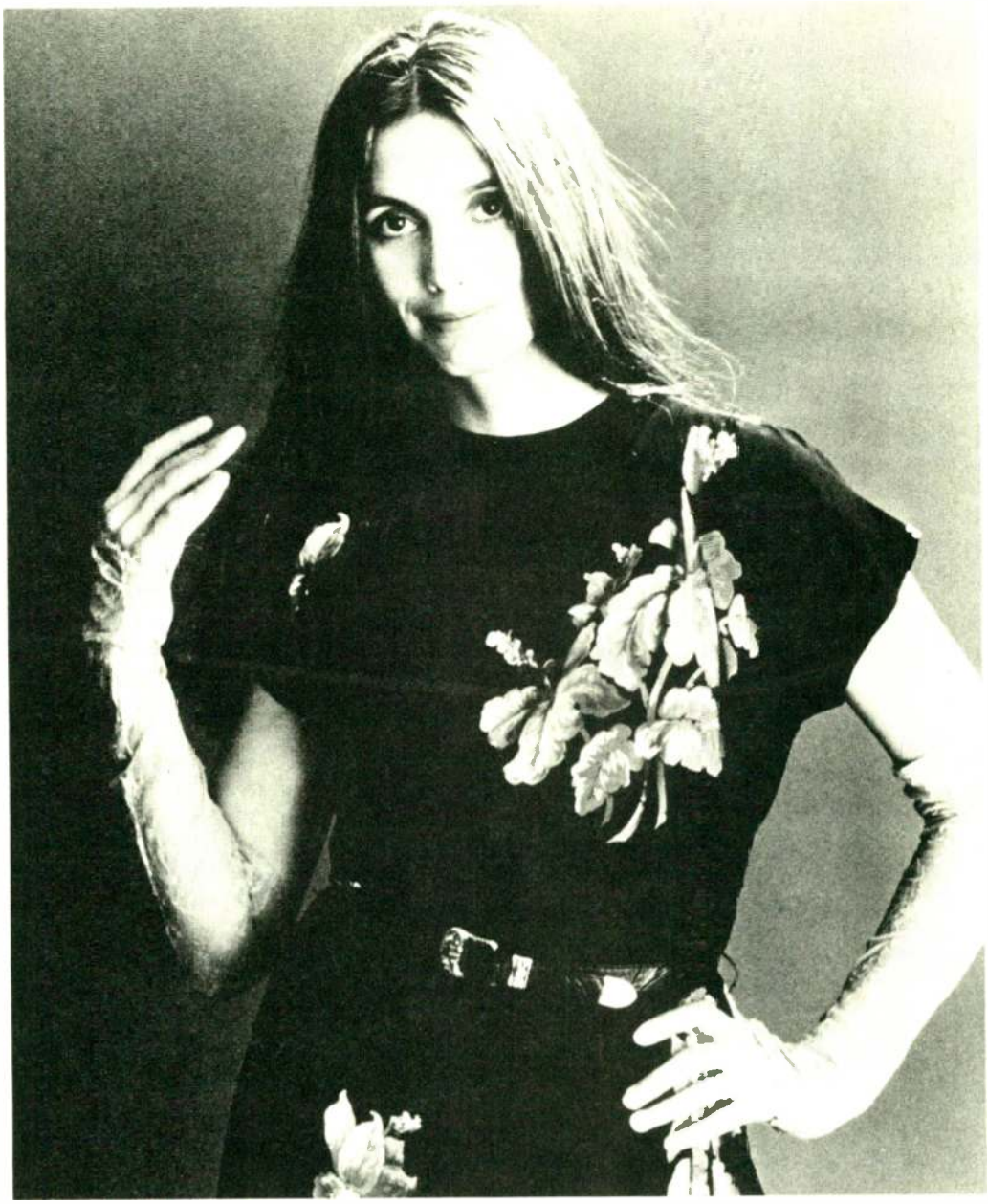
sophistication such gracefully gritty music implies, its basic *raison d'etre* has always been to make people dance and feel good. So catch Roomful of Blues live if you can (the band tours extensively); otherwise, *Hot Little Mama* is as energetic and precisely pumping a studio album as you could want from a band that still cranks 'em out in the ageless American roadhouse tradition.

—Crispin Cioe

EMMYLOU HARRIS
Evangeline
(Warner Brothers)
ROSANNE CASH
Seven Year Ache
(Columbia)

Seemingly so similar, Rosanne Cash and Emmylou Harris offer more to contrast than compare on their new albums. Cash's producer-husband Rodney Crowell may have graduated from the tutelage of Harris and *her* producer-husband Brian Ahern, but the work of both couples shares less in style and technique than it does in imagination. In fact, these two talented ladies approach the "neo-country" style so differently that one wonders if they're even of the same school.

Although *Evangeline* and *Seven Year Ache* feature some of the same musicians and singers—as well as Crowell's prodigious songwriting talents—Harris' LP is an exercise in austerity compared to *Seven Year Ache*'s lush melodic layer cake. While Cash solidifies the fine impression left by her debut and goes on to break new ground, Emmylou searches for a style somewhere between her "Hot Band" sound (which almost became a rut for her), and the acoustic approach of her last set, *Roses In The Snow*.



Rosanne Cash qualifies as country not so much because of her singing, the arrangements on her record, or even her surname, but by virtue of the subject matter she tackles—songs about love, hurt . . . and cheating. The music is a rich amalgam of pop, rock, blues and even jazz. Rosanne's commanding vocals wrench emotion from songs by Keith Sykes, Tom Petty, Steve Forbert and—on one obligatory straight country tune—Merle Haggard, with true authority. Her self-penned title tune is a clever grafting of the old cheating theme with a new feminine understanding; she sees the "seven year itch" as the ache of loneliness, and follows it with another poignant composition, "Blue Moon With Heartache," that expresses the flip side of the situation so effectively it sent chills down this listener's spine.

Emmylou chooses song subjects that are less linear and more expansive, but the accompaniment and her pristine singing belie a certain country purity. As a balladeer she shines on the two Crowell songs and Paul Siebel's "Spanish Johnny," (with guest vocals by Waylon Jennings) and James Taylor's "Millworker," but the two truly stunning cuts are "How High The Moon" and "Mr. Sandman," two classic swing tunes delivered with a lilting gaiety.

In fact, when either of these ladies attacks the swing sound (which Cash covers with "My Baby Thinks He's A Train" and "I Can't Resist," albeit punchier than Harris, who guests as singer on the cuts), they point to both their obvious differences—Cash the hearty sensualist as opposed to Harris' pristine clarity. As long as both keep stretching the bounds of country music with their unique flair, they'll continue to deliver great music.—*Bob Patterson*

WILLIE NILE
Golden Dawn
(Arista)
ROBIN LANE
Imitation Life
(Warners)
GREG KIHN
RocKihn Roll
(Elektra)

I hope the statute of limitations on this offense has run out, because I have something to confess: a couple of friends and I stole folk-rock records from a department store in an Eastern state almost every Saturday in 1967. Wedged them in over our shirttails under big army coats. We weren't so taken with the "message" songs; we wanted to absorb our politics obliquely, in code: "The Mighty Quinn," "White Rabbit." Most of all, we wanted help with our late adolescent love agonies. I'm reminiscing because I have three LPs from folk-rock-type songwriters and have decided I would not have risked stealing them.

Robin Lane and Willie Nile are escapees from the club circuit, and come by their folkie stigmata honestly; Greg Kihn is sooner a son of Buddy Holly, and the sensibility he tries to revive is more pop than folk. He ends up in this omnibus review, because that's what happens to an artist after five albums of doing *something* wrong.

Like most born-again rockers, Robin Lane claims she's been shown the first photos of the Apocalypse. They show up in the first stanza of *Imitation Life's* Send Me An Angel: *The water runs deep/Under the cold concrete/ Empties out its waste/Into the harbor/Hand in hand/We watched in silence/As the flowers cried/And the people died . . .*

Well. I never heard Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction" without having a good laugh, and there's something about Robin Lane starting a record with The Destruction of the World-As-We-Know-It that recalls the AM caricature of "protest songs." *Imitation Life* is like a ceaselessly down day of smoking reefer in Boston: the singer of "No Control" goes down to the Jordan Marsh department store with a friend to *put some makeup on our face.* Alice, the Boston waitress who inhabits "Imitation Life," is full of either smugness or ironic anomie: *I can sit in front of my color TV/Relax and watch the movies.* I can't seem to distill the message.

Lane's growing religiosity might have yielded interesting lyrics—she seems to be in a self-absorbed, mystical phase that stops short of doctrinaire religious cant. But it's too muddled; and the songs need more woodshedding, or adroit editing. The band is strong, assured in their twin-guitar sound that evokes Television and often, The Byrds. Lane's debut showed her to be at peak form writing desperate love songs, and "Say Goodbye," "When Things Go Wrong," and "For You" qualify on that score. Her ballad style is accomplished; it's the upbeat numbers that sound a little shrill. Lane's like a young boxer, flailing when she should be throwing measured jabs. Her mistakes arise out of ardency, not corruption, so Lane still merits high expectations.

Greg Kihn does not suffer from the strains Great Ideas can impose on a rocker. *RocKihnRoll* is buttoned down, squeaky clean in its production, free of bad rhymes if not trite ones, and sometimes dangerously bloodless. When he finally lets out a couple of whoops, amidst a feisty and unapologetically hoarse vocal performance on "True Confessions," it's as if Kihn had suddenly popped into the room with you.

Tommy Roe's "Sheila" is an inspired choice for a cover, and Kihn goes after it the right way—not a replication of the oldie, but a celebration of it, retaining the essentials—that mincing half-speed start, some dirty guitar, a little Buddy Holly sob in the vocal. After an overlong guitar break, the drama leaves the song—but you're more likely to play it again.

Kihn has sufficient pizzazz to come up with his own teenybopper love song, the catchy "Valerie," and then pay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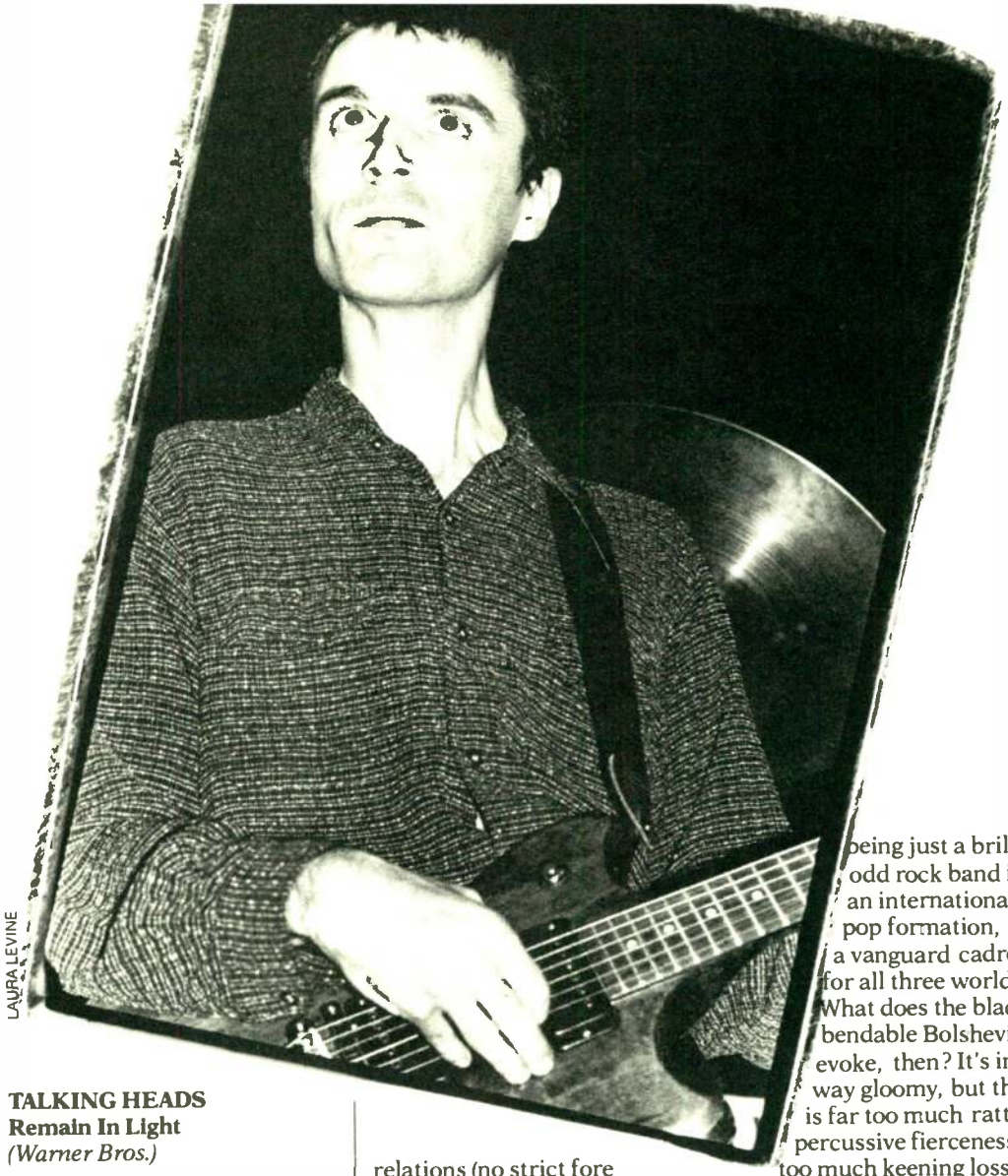
Willie Nile

homage to the genre with "The Breakup Song (They Don't Write 'Em)". A hiccoughing, insinuating model pop ditty, "The Breakup Song" is conscious of its cliches. The discomforting thing about this record is how facile it sounds—here's your classic bass fill, perfectly executed, here's your rising organ line right where it belongs, here's the odd bit of vocal growl in perfect good taste. Kihn has all the tools he needs but the confidence to take several giant steps away from text-book pop.

To listen to Willie Nile is to be on the edge of your seat, waiting for the random lick or lyric image that propels a song abruptly forward—not so unlike Dylan, Springsteen or first-album Steve Forbert, to whom he's frequently compared. (His debut LP of last year was outstanding.) With *Golden Down*, though he still has a stoking band and a certain grandness in his writing, he nestles into an echelon considerably below them.

Nile starts this second album with an embarrassingly hackneyed image: *I am a poor boy from the other side of town/I shovel black coal and I watch the sun go down/Beyond the crooked streets of pain and misery/There is a girl who is waiting there for me* . . . This is not songwriting—it's imitation of, or homage to songwriting, and if Loudon Wainwright delivered it with a couple winks and grimaces, who could stifle a laugh.

There are nine songs here; here's how five of them start: *I am . . . I can't . . . I like . . . I was . . . I saw* . . . The formula starts to wear thin, even with a butt-rocking band of New York New Wave graduates like Willie's got. There are a couple of nice images—the singer's baby walking down the street like a *hand grenade with the pin pulled out*, the singer inviting a Parisian gendarme to twist—but most of the material comes right off the folk-rock scrapheap. Willie Nile looks and sounds like a scrapper, and that's lucky, because he better fight off those cliches before they bury him.—*Fred Schruers*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TALKING HEADS
Remain In Light
(Warner Bros.)

Along comes David Byrne and his Engels, Eno, to provide food for funking and for thought with an LP unlike absolutely anything anywhere hitherto. It sounds as if an extremely tight white-pop International Brigade (the Robert Johnson Battalion?) was recruited and trained in the subtleties, crossstalk inflections, and collective nonhierarchical group

relations (no strict fore ground/background splits as in rock 'n' roll) of tribally based electric Africano funk a la Fela and Johnny Mensa. Said unit works up eight meaty embellished rhythm feasts and then patterns of speechifying incantation, long crossbar melodic drones with sudden great thrilling choral washes layered on top. This would be arty, turgid, pretentious and *boring* indeed if Byrne et all were your typical intellectual freebooting petit mal bourgeois despoilers of other people's traditions. As we all know, that is not the case. The collective intelligence of Talking Heads is the most rigorous around, and given their concern with the texture of recorded sound and the utmost sanguine rhythmic precision of parts, it is not too surprising that they would be the ones to break out from being just a brilliant odd rock band into an internationalist pop formation, a vanguard cadre for all three worlds. What does the black bendable Bolshevism evoke, then? It's in no way gloomy, but there is far too much rattling percussive fierceness; too much keening loss in massed open fifth harmonies, and martial intensity to call this "entertaining" or "partytime." Raucous and passionately danceable as it is, *Remain In Light* has nothing at all to do with leisure—its joy is that of hard work and hard lives.

Even five years ago as a raw trio, the irregular partisans that would grow into this great host were It, the tops, the best thing going anywhere for pure smart soulful music. Their new record is a confirmation of their pre-eminent role and is a monumental step forward, a storming of the Winter Palace moment. Whether their path is taken or not (I wouldn't bet on it, you know how reactionary and narrow-minded most rockers are) it throws a long, hard shadow over mere mortal pop for the many days to come.—*Van Gosse*

EARTH, WIND & FIRE
Faces
(ARC/Columbia)

Throughout the 70s Earth, Wind & Fire was the standard bearer for the old values of rhythm and blues, while simultaneously adding vital new influences to the style. Vocal harmonies of ethereal beauty, strong supportive horn lines, the rhythm section's crisp play, and uplifting, often judgmental lyrics were utilized with the utmost skill. Likewise, third world instruments, such as leader Maurice White's African finger piano, the kalimba, rhythms from a variety of South American cultures, and rich jazzy solos were wonderfully integrated into Earth, Wind & Fire's arrangements.

This made E,W&F, along with Stevie Wonder, the leading force in black pop, a position consolidated by a spectacular mix of visual trickery and musical skill in concert. But the group's last album *I Am* was a disappointment, sounding competent where they were once daring, and bored instead of inspired. It was a sharp decline from the mid-70s heights of *That's the Way of the World, Gratitude,* and *Spirit.* One wondered if the stumble of *I Am* would be a permanent fall from grace.

Thankfully, its new four-sided, 15-song album *Faces* re-affirms E,W&F's role as the world's finest progressive soul band. While not an innovative work, the beauty of *Faces* is the band's feeling of renewed vigor and spirit, qualities that separate them from the many other good self-contained black bands.

For example, "Let Me Talk" is in the tradition of distinctive singles like "Shining Star," "Serpentine Fire," and "Getaway." Opening with a swirl of Larry Dunn's synthesizer and Al McKay's chucky rhythm guitar, it shifts effortlessly between two grooves while presenting an aggressive lyric filled with references to inflation, Arab oil, and pseudo-chic *("trying to find excitement in the labels that you wear")* articulated by Maurice White's husky baritone. E,W&F is a very socially conscious group, but wisely they realize commercial success rides on music that usually subverts any lyrical message. Another song, "Pride," speaks about the need for self-confidence and moral strength. Yet it's the brilliant horn arrangement that one remembers. The play of reeds against brass and the shimmering quality of the horn's ensemble compares favorably with the power of the classic big bands.

Among the album's other pleasures are percussionist Philip Bailey's soaring vocals on "Sailaway" and "Win or Lose;" Steve Lukather's melodic rock guitar on "Back on the Road;" the steady groove of drummers Ralph Johnson and Fred White and bassist Verdine White on "Turn It Into Something Good;" the mix of latin rhythms and jazz soloing on the lengthy title track; and the band's harmonies on everything.

Faces may be a great album, but it's too soon to label it so. Time will, as they say, tell. What is immediately apparent is that E,W&F is back making sweet soul music. That is good news indeed.—*Nelson George*

RUPERT HINE
Immunity
(A&M)

Hine, a noted English producer and prog-rock figure, takes us on a spookhouse ride through his neuroses ("I Hang on to My Vertigo," "I Think a Man Will Hang Soon") with horrorshow keyboard blasts and electronic fright gags for dramatic punctuation. Basically a one-man show, but Marianne Faithfull's vampiric growl on "Misplaced Love" deserves honorable mention.

THE SWINGING MADISONS
(Select)

With a great name, an inspired choice of covers ("Hurdy Gurdy Man," "Volare"), and a sound somewhere between George Thorogood and Television, this smarmy-looking New York foursome deserves more than the five songs alloted them on this 12" EP. Song titles of the month: "Guilty White Liberal" and "Put Your Bra Back On."

JOE ELY
Musta Notta Gotta Lotta
(South Coast/MCA)

The best Joe Ely album since the last Joe Ely album. Why this killer Texan—with his 180 proof blend of rock 'n' roll moxie, honky-tonk soul, and Tex-Mex jive, not to mention a band as hot as homemade chili—isn't a star is a mystery. With any luck, this album is the solution.

ROBERT GORDON
Are You Gonna Be The One
(RCA)

Guess Robert finally took that dump he's been waiting on. This record, without departing from the revival spirit, doesn't sound quite as stagey as the earlier paint-by-numbers efforts. His timbre is looser, more natural. Radio play has made it obvious that Marshall Crenshaw's "Someday, Someway" is a highly pleasurable cut, and it proves that Robert can occasionally put both feet in the real world, without relinquishing his good-old-buy fantasy.

SPANDAU BALLET
Journeys to Glory
(Chrysalis)

It's hard to see the music through the movement. Spandau Ballet currently hold the U.K. charts captive under the banner of a glam revival in which so-called Blitz kids dress up like dandies and bop to antiseptic electro-funk. This ultra-cool quintet leads the pack by virtue of their immaculate packaging (the Aryan cover design, snappy dress—their hair dresser gets a credit here, f'r cryinoutloud) and a series of rather impressive singles. But at a full twelve inches, they milk themselves dry trying to get an album's worth of music out of an EP's worth of ideas. The modern dance they ain't.

LEON REDBONE
Branch to Branch
(Emerald City)

What the Masked Man of Nostalgia does—recreating 78 RPM Great Depression boozin' blues at 33⅓—he does better than almost anybody. But too much of this LP sounds like the same old song. Highlight: Jelly Roll Morton's weepy "Why" with Dr. John gently tinkling the 88s near the end.

AL GREEN
The Lord Will Make A Way
(Myrrh)
MARVIN GAYE
In Our Lifetime
(Tamla)

Soul music bridges the gap between the bedroom and the pulpit with the best soul men linking the roles of sinner and saint. Like Sam Cooke before him, Al Green combined his gospel background with a savvy and sensitive understanding of wordly themes and made the best soul records of the pre-disco '70s. As the decade wore on, though, his outlook grew increasingly religious; he established his own church where he could sing and preach the gospel in a more suitable setting and his album releases became more sporadic and idiosyncratic.

Though he has always recorded some overtly religious material—"Jesus Is Waiting," "My God Is Real," "Belle"—*The Lord Will Make A Way* is Green's first album of gospel standards and his first in a six-LP deal with Myrrh and Word, Inc., a born-again-

Christian propaganda organization.

The music ranges from the insistent rhythms and third-beat drumming of "In The Holy Name Of Jesus" and "I Have A Friend Above All Others," reminiscent of his best known style, to the organ-based funky church music if the title cut which sounds more like tunes from his post-Willie Mitchell LPs *The Belle Album* and *Truth 'N' Time*.

Unlike those LPs which were gospel-inflected and religious in intent if not in content—*The Lord Will Make A Way* is Al Green's half of a conversation with God. And that's problem which limits the appeal of this LP. In spite of the soaring octave jumps on "None But The Righteous" or the confidence in providence of the title cut and "Pass Me Not," it's hard for the non-believing listener to make a one-to-one identification with the singer.

Hopefully as Green grows as a gospel singer (he's not a "soul" singer anymore), he'll regain that tension between fear and ecstacy, between the saint and the sinner than made *The Belle Album* so special.

Marvin Gaye used gospel-like shouts and swoops in some of his early hits, but his ambition was to be a jazz singer. Since wresting artistic control of his records in 1971, Gaye has followed a moody, jazz-tinged path, though religion has always been a part of his music. More than gospel testifier, he is singing preacher and records like "What's Goin' On" and "Inner City Blues (Makes Me Wanna Holler)" were the sort of social comments one might hear from the pulpit. He extended his moralizing through *Here, My Dear*, a chillingly personal account of his marriage and divorce.

In Our Lifetime is about the here-and-now, and presents the image of life as a pilgrimage, a journey in which our goal is to make ourselves more aware of the world around us.

The artist pays the price/So you won't hve to pay/If only we would listen/To what they have to say, he sings, describing songs of "wisdom . . . loving . . . hating" and how we must learn from them all in order to lead a fuller, more righteous life.

While Green's music concerns man's possible redemption in heaven, Gaye's songs describe the limits of life on earth. So a sexy number like "Love Party" sounds sad, not lusty, with its aching vocals and the reminder that life is transitory and we're not around for long. The climatic *oooohhhh, baby, let's make love* of the title cut is also tinged with this melancholy.

In spite of this outlook, the LP has a lush, Garden-of Eden sound characterized by soft, haunting background vocals, Gamble-and-Huff-like muted trumpets and xylophone flourishes straight from the Caribbean. Not only does Gaye mix the saint and sinner identities, he dresses up his resignation in some high-class pastels.—*Stuart Cohn*

SANTANA
Zebop!
(Columbia)

With *Zebop!*, Santana has added a new groove to its stylistic arsenal that rests comfortably somewhere between such classic English rock influences as Traffic and Genesis and the Afro-Cuban fusion that has always been the group's *modus operandi*. The results are mixed, but the strategy that Carlos and co-producer/manager Bill Graham have in mind is clear: seek out Journey's audience, overtake them, and thereby carve out a market share that will guarantee a string of top-5 selling albums. That's fine with me because Santana doing Journey is better than Journey doing itself.

There is the occasional gaffe here, like the song "Over and Over." It's not that Santana can't play believable arena rock: Alex Ligertwood knows how to bleat out an anthem for the headbangers with the best of 'em, being a Scotsman from Glasgow who put in a few years with Brian Auger's Oblivion Express doing the same thing. It's just that this kind of minor-keyed rock sledgehammer is merely an obvious ploy to snap awake 20,000 'luded heads in the Lakeland, Florida Civic Center. Far more compatible with Santana's straighter rock proclivities is the very well-crafted Russ Ballard composition "Winning," which features exquisitely crafted guitar solos from Carlos and a great downbeat modulation for the ride out.

Otherwise, Side Two of *Zebop!* is pretty much vintage Santana. On "American Gypsy," percussionists Orestes Vilato, Raul Rekow and the amazing Armando Peraza trade fours with panache and abandon over a piano vamp by Richard Baker that would make Charlie Palmieri feel good. "I Love You Much Too Much" is the kind of extended Latin jam with rhythm changes that most bands mangle, but since these are the guys that invented it, there's a degree of refinement and sensitivity here that can still be breath-taking. So, as long as Santana still spends the majority of the time being itself, I guess I don't mind a couple of tunes wherein the band puts on the Journey masks—it's not a bad impersonation, anyway.—*Crispin Cioe*

TOM PETTY
Hard Promises
(MCA)

Tom Petty is just about my favorite cracker. The dictionary says a cracker is "a poor white person of the rural southeastern United States," but to me a cracker is a state of mind, and I don't care if Petty, originally from Gainesville, Florida, is a very well-to-do white rock star living in L.A.—he still acts like a cracker horse trader: beleaguered and snakebit, just trying to cut his losses, humble-talking, but ultimately canny as a Rockefeller.

I'm not referring to problems with his record company, first getting his right to self-governance back after months of wearying lawsuits, then turning around and fighting to keep his *Hard Promises* LP's list price down. I'm talking about the way he poor-mouths his own skills (and goals) as a songwriter. "I don't know anything about the U.N., so I'll sing about the things I'm more in touch with," said Tom a couple years back, and he talks about his love songs as if they were bolts of fabric cut from the same ratty roll used by dozens of other rag merchants.

The point Petty ends up emphasizing is right—on paper, his lyrics don't make you smack your forehead and throw away your poetry books. But he has a natural, colloquial style and the sense to trust it: *"Well, yeah, I might have chased a few women around/All it ever got me was down . . ."* Sound like the truth to me. The angrier Petty the songwriter gets, the better his eye for details. Amid the bitter but not aimless machete strokes of "The Criminal Kind," he manages to notice

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dog tags on the mirror/hangin' down from a chain and a girl who *don't wanna die in no liquor store.* Like Dylan's "The Walls of Red Wing," the song implies a diatribe against the penal system. Ultimately, it doesn't apologize for the criminal, even if it only lets him feel the flat of the blade.

Another lyric that can't go unmentioned is on "Something Big." If he didn't pace a few paces composing this gem of compressed narrative, then the song is one hell of a happy accident. When Speedball, a two-bit scam artist, asks the night clerk for a drink, then rebuffs the clerk's mumbly suggestion of a place outside of town that *might still have some wine* and asks instead for an outside line, you know as much as Petty wants you to know at that point in the song, and it's plenty.

This album is a collection of vignettes, with sparer arrangements than *Damn The Torpedoes.* If Petty's influences are the Byrds and Dylan on one hand, and Graham Parker and Bruce Springsteen on the other, *Torpedoes* was full of the latter duo's influence. Almost every song rammed through the gears fast. *Hard Promises* definitely sounds Byrdsy, with a dollop of Merle Haggard (cross a smart Okie with a playing-dumb cracker and you get someone who declares, as Petty does on "Letting You Go," that *There no one as honest as those in pain.)* Side two of this record is a rather forlorn suite, and the liner photo of a seated Petty conducting a dry run with the band looks more like the Juilliard quartet that the boogie-woogie flu victims of *Torpedoes'* back cover. Except for the drolly barreling "King's Road," and the resplendently full-bore single, "The Waiting," this is a rather artsy outing, and probably a conscious pull-back from the drive of its predecessor. I'd be the last to say that means Pettys' slipping. Retrenching is more like it, and taking care of business is just fine. Even if he doesn't know anything about the U.N.

—Fred Schruers

CHEAP TRICK
All Shook Up
(Epic)

In offering the last solemn note of the Beatle's "A Day In The Life" as the first note of their new George Martin-produced LP Cheap Trick creates a 13-year ellipsis, making the period between "Sgt. Pepper" and "All Shook Up" as meaningful as a function word linking main and subordinate clauses. Pop has long been the name of the game in commercial music, and the Beatles brought to it a remarkable freshness, maturity and richness of ideas, leaving in their wake a decade of cheap opportunism (Beatlemania) and revivalism.

By using the final note of the classic Beatles threnody as the springboard for their own leap into pop, Cheap Trick invariably invites comparisons that cannot be in their favor. However, they do manage to demonstrate that with enough inventiveness and adventurous spirit, today's pop musicians can borrow freely from any source without dulling the edge of originality. With that in mind, why not the best?

Side One is very much late Beatles—"Sgt. Pepper" to "Abbey Road"—the fun period, when the group turned in on its own legend and sold us all on enigma. Robin Zander on "Just Got Back" wails like Lennon on "The White Album," while Rick Nielsen plays many of the familiar guitar riffs from the lost generation. Cheap Trick's "The World's Greatest Lover" is a marvelous abstraction, a Walrus for the '80s.

Side Two leans more toward the early Beatles, "I Love You Honey But I Hate Your Friends" and "Love Comes A Tumblin' Down" are fairly

straight blues-rock, although "High Priest Of Rhythmic Noise," in its high end/fuzztone vocal counterpoint, is reminiscent of the Beatles experimentation with multi-tracking during a time when instrumental skill and execution counted more than good engineering.

Though Cheap Trick will probably remain more of a traditional Midwest rock than a pop act, the more mature style exhibited here is anomalous with their ultra-coy, almost infantile stage act. Rick Nielsen's mugging, for example, mimics the whimpering of a sly puppy angling for another 10 minutes of heavy petting.

It may be some time before the honesty of Cheap Trick's presentation measures up to the quality of their music. It would be nice to report that playing "All Shook Up" backwards at 78 rpm yields a small voice chanting, 'I buried persona.'—*Mark Mehler*

THE WHO
Face Dances
(Warner Bros.)

There's a folk saying that warns "if you're not an anarchist at 20, you won't have the energy to be village fire chief by 30." Pete Townshend, when he reached 30 in 1975, was trying to douse his cynicism on *The Who By Numbers*. Since then, there have been at least 12 important deaths in his extended family—Keith Moon and 11 kids in Cincinnati—and he's earned the long look in the mirror that *Face Dances* represents. In the accelerated gypsy reel "Daily Records," he says he knows by now he'll never change. But he's capable of learning something from watching his two real-life daughters growing up: *Got to admit that I created private worlds/Cold sex and booze don't impress my little girls . . . When you are eleven the whole world's out to lunch.*

A man of 37, then, living on the banks of the Thames and thinking about his wife and his work. He knows he and the wife have passed the point of no return, and the intro of

"You Better You Bet" heralds that realization with a plangent keyboard chord, building synthesizer line, and harpies' chorus of schoolboy voices. It's a song of mature but slightly twisted love, talking sometimes obscurely, sometimes roughishly *(You work on me with open arms and open legs)* but breathing warmth through its cliches: *You better love me all the time now/You better shove me back in line now.*

Auteur Townshend is determined to have his husbandly say, and the following song, "Don't Let Go the Coat," tests how far the faithful will follow his logic. *It ain't really true rock and roll,* he says, *Unless I'm hanging on to you when I hold it next time . . . I won't let go of the coat.* This ambivalence between his liking for domesticity and his love for his job out there in teenage wasteland has become Townshend's most interesting ache (putting to rest the obsessed, Leopold Bloomian figure behind songs like "Squeeze Box" and "My Baby Gives It Away"). The soldierly essence of his rocker's creed seems to be a line from "Don't Let Go the Coat" that singer Roger Daltrey slips in with newly delicate inflections: *–But you've got to finish everything you've started.*

Daltrey's vocals, always colored by the phrasing of Townshend's demo tapes, have never sounded so much like the vocals on Pete's solo albums. *Face Dances*, it seems odd to realize, is the first Who studio LP since Moon's death. In place of Moon's pummeling we have Kenney Jones' spirited precision, and the entire effort is more controlled. ("The production of our records has nothing to do with sound," Pete complained to Jonathan Cott in a 1970 interview, "It's got to do with trying to keep Keith Moon on his damn drum stool and keeping him away from the booze.")

Reports from the Who's recent U.K. tour have Townshend and Daltrey feuding onstage, which may be healthy, because this LP is disciplined to a fault. While I enjoy the subtler expressiveness of Daltrey's singing –his reading of Pete's "How Can You Do It Alone" seems to reflect every gyration of the fitful Townshend mind–I also miss the animal extravagance of his delivery of, say, "Sister Disco."

Nor is this record brimming with hot guitar. The band is leaving a lot of the busy work to Rabbit Bundrick's keyboards, and I think that shortcut is one of the things that makes this album's disappointments–"Did You Steal My Money," "Another Tricky Day," and "You" (by Entwistle)–as wooden as they are mean-spirited. Bundrick's exertions sound just great underneath "You Better" 's rich mix, or drilling through the subterranean thunder of Entwistle's "The Quiet One" –but they can barely pull you from verse to verse of the diatribe songs.

What *Face Dances* comes down to is that Townshend is a lot more compelling talking about his wife than his work these days. While that may not make him ideal fodder for the next mass audience of tough boys, it does mean he's still honest enough–and when he bears down, musically powerful enough–to keep their faith.—*Fred Schruers*

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS
Trust
(Columbia)

Oh Elvis. The nasty persona has afforded him money, beautiful women (Bebe Buell, for one) and all the other evils of materialistic culture (including media attention) he puts down in song, but the distance from his audience the persona creates has sometimes hurt his music. Sure the melodies have always been great—the reworkings of Beatles and Motown lines imaginative, the bridges the best in rock. But the production he's employed has often veiled his music as much as distinquished it from more conventional pop. On last year's *Get Happy!*, in particular, he retreated (to Holland) behind a thick, roller rink organ wash at the same time he pushed Stax and Motown riffs forward. My attention was less immediately drawn to the 20 great songs than to the strange twist of a stand-offish pose he threw at us.

What makes *Trust* his most commanding album since *This Year's Model* is its forthrightness. He's placed his nasal, sometimes straining vocals out on the front porch for all to see its frailties and poor imitations of American country singers—but also to sense more of its emotional resonance, especially on songs like "Shot With His Own Gun" and "New Lace Sleeves." More importantly, Steve Nieve finally takes his paws off the organ sustain and lays out the melody on the more evocative and less concealing acoustic piano. Coupled with the renewed presence of the guitar (including the work of Martin Belmont), this gives *Trust* a more open, brighter feel.

The music ranges from the Bo Diddley-chuggin' "Lover's Walk" to a Kurt Weillish and overgrandiose "Shot With His Own Gun." The ground between includes the pulsing piano chording "Strict Time" and a slow but punchy descending organ mood piece called "Watch Your Step," the album's stand-out. His themes, as always, focus on emotional fascism, the imperialism of the bedroom. Here, too, a less postured stance on Elvis' part brings the point home more truly. The scenario in "Pretty Words" of the geezer who reads the headline "Millions Murdered," tucks the paper under his arm, and trades pleasantries with his wife—says more about the banalities of human interactions than, say, the more stilted scene of "Two Little Hitlers" from *Armed Forces*.

Trust is the social compact—in the Costello mythology, the mode of dupe. But as the album's title, I think it indicates his increased trust in himself—and his audience—to play it straight, without the defensive snigger and obfuscating, nasty pose. *—Barry Jacobs*

DAVE EDMUNDS
Twangin . . .
(Swan Song)
THE RUMOUR
Purity of Essence
(Hannibal)

These 2 records represent the highest level of rock 'n' roll session work in England. For over a decade Dave Edmunds and Rumour leader Brinsley Schwarz have championed a musician's approach to making records that has often fallen afoul of the generally fashion conscious British pop scene; they espouse a player's style that has never indulged in pointless noodling but has concentrated on perfecting nuance and the kind of subtle fills and runs that characterize the great early rock and R&B traditions.

Both guitarists have been wary of stardom and the inevitable compromise it brings to musical direction. Edmunds recently broke from Rockpile just as that group was about to make it big, while Schwarz has always shunned the flash and pop approach since the legendary band he led under his own name a decade ago was nearly destroyed at the outset by pointless hype. *Purity of Essence* features a stripped down Rumour after the departure of Schwarz's longtime sidekick, keyboardist Bob Andrews. Schwarz and ex-Ducks Deluxe guitarist Martin Belmont concentrate on a hot two-guitar sound that keeps the record interesting even at the points where the band's direction seems to stumble in confusion. This, of course, is the risk you take with a laid back attitude as a group leader, but Schwarz seems happy enough to take it one song at a time without undue concern about the overall coherence of the package. For this reason you've got to listen carefully to *Purity of Essence* in order to appreciate the record, but the results are well worth the scrutiny. Aside from the little touches inside of songs, like the feedback punctuation in the middle of "Tula," there are a few moments when Schwarz and Belmont work magic. On Randy Newman's "Have You Seen My Baby" the light, melodic touch Schwarz specializes in meshes beautifully with Belmont's searing bite, while their recast of "Rubber Band Man" is a no-holds-barred guitar rampage with drummer Stephen Goulding pounding away for all he's worth. "Falling In Love With a Dream" recaptures the Ducks Deluxe spirit, as does the set ender, "Name and Number," both of which are Belmont/Goulding compositions which rank with their best work.

Edmunds' solo LPs have always been the peak Rockpile performances and *Twangin . . .*, which may well be the last music we ever hear from Rockpile, is no exception. The devastating choogle "Something Happens," the irrepressible "Cheap Talk, Patter and Jive" and the Mickey Jupp rocker "You'll Never Get Me Up (In One of Those)" deserve to be on a Rockpile greatest hits collection. "Singin' the Blues" could have graced *Seconds of Pleasure*, while the hit single, John Fogerty's "Almost Saturday Night," in one of the best tracks Edmunds has ever cut. The record also includes a version of the rockabilly classic "The Race Is On" with the Stray Cats backing Edmunds up with more spirit than they mustered on their own debut LP. Just in case anyone forgets that Edmunds was one of the first rockabilly revivalists on the scene, the record ends with a devastating version of "Baby Let's Play House" recorded by Edmunds while he was at Rockfield studios in *1968—John Swenson*

THE CLASH
Sandinista!
(Epic)

The slapstick guerrilla politics have never sounded more outlandishly unfashionable. Gone are the triple-front-line punk harmonics & amphetamine raw power. Ditto for the crunching metallic guitars. And, to top it all off, this three-record l-o-n-g player is fully one-third filler. But, despite enough foolhardy flaws to sink any ordinary diamond, *Sandinista* offers more than a few gems-in-the-rough to reward the diligent

prospector. The Clash may be victims of their own overweaning ambitions, but the music's daring fusion of multinational pop idioms is a stirring declaration of belief in the global community.

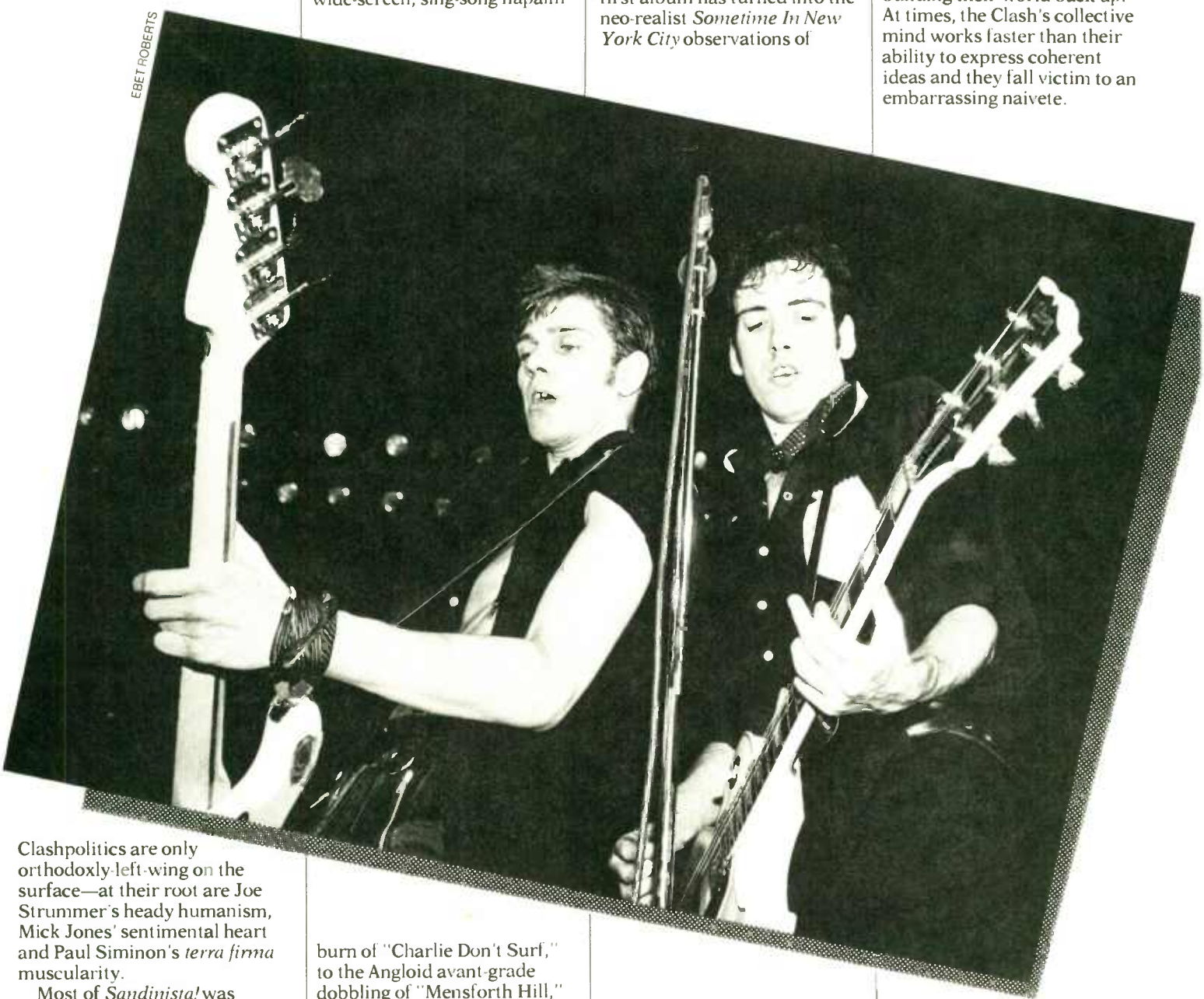
vulnerability of Mick Jones' horror that "Somebody Got Murdered." Like a big-budget James Bond movie, *Sandinista!* shifts locale in the flash of a jump-cut, from the Irish-jig fiddle of Tymon Dog's "Lose This Skin," to the demented wide-screen, sing-song napalm

attain a relaxed pace which segues with abrupt efficiency into the more urgent cuts.

In its blaring headline lyrics and up-to-the-moment pop distillations, *Sandinista!* aims for daily, rather than eternal truths. The moralizing of the first album has turned into the neo-realist *Sometime In New York City* observations of

revolution in Nicaragua/There was no interference from America/Human rights from Amerika! No longer are the Clash intent of tearing down society; with *Sandinista!*, they have accepted the much harder responsibility of slowly building their world back up. At times, the Clash's collective mind works faster than their ability to express coherent ideas and they fall victim to an embarrassing naivete.

EBET ROBERTS



Clashpolitics are only orthodoxly-left-wing on the surface—at their root are Joe Strummer's heady humanism, Mick Jones' sentimental heart and Paul Siminon's *terra firma* muscularity.

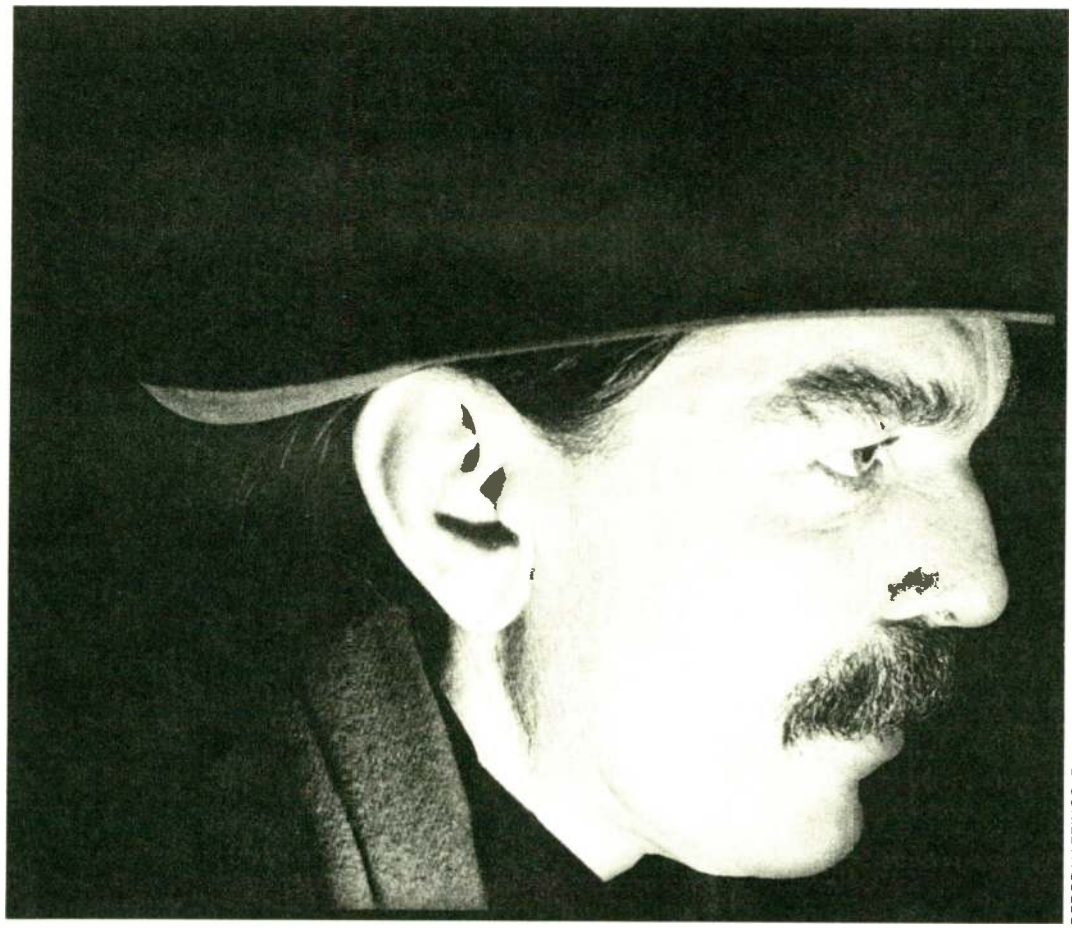
Most of *Sandinista!* was recorded in a burst of activity in New York and certain tracks reflect the non-stop energy of the city's multi-ethnic street life—as in the buzzsaw rapping of "The Magnificent Seven," the heavy metal soul of Eddy Grant's "Police On My Back," the video-game cocktail conversation of the discoid "Ivan Meets G.I. Joe," or the hardened-over crooning

burn of "Charlie Don't Surf," to the Angloid avant-grade dobbling of "Mensforth Hill," to the heavy Jamaican patios and Mikey Dread dub of "Living In Fame."

The sheer variety of musical sytles on *Sandinista!* makes it impossible to digest the album all at once, as songs fade in and out of the whole, with hooks to be discovered where you least expected them. Even the elongated studio dub experiments, in many ways the ultimate doodling indulgence,

"Washington Bullets," which details how a leftist guerilla group, known as the Sandinistas, were able to topple Somoza's military dictatorship in Nicaragua. The key to the song lies in Strummer's triumphant insight into the real reason why the Sandinistas were triumphant: *For the very first time ever/When they had a*

Although filled with peaks and valleys, at its best, *Sandinista!* makes you realize it is precisely *that* innocence which may be our last hope for salvation. Or am I overstating the case a bit? Either way the Clash will make you listen.—*Roy Trakin*



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART AND HIS MAGIC BAND
Doc at the Radar Station
(Virgin)

Getting rude noise out of trained musicians isn't easy. If you ask for atonal improvisation, you'll get a cliched cacophony that turns regular sooner or later; real jagged sound requires planning. Pursuant to a widly singular vision that encompasses the most original ensemble sound in rock—and perhaps in all contemporary music—Don Van Vliet, alias Captain Beefheart, takes no chances: every note, every drum lick is prearranged. In a sense, Van Vliet composes chamber music—he uses a fixed ensemble (basically a five-man rock band) rather than studio collaging, and he only allows himself to improvise on vocals—but without chamber music's polite connotations. Beefheart jangles.

Nothing in his music stays regular for long. Riffs (which, individually, could almost be blues licks) chase each other through his songs like wild dogs in a deserted city—worrying each others' heels, scattering, regrouping, rejoicing in havoc. The pulse sputters and revs and starts and stops; it's only steady long enough to jolt you when it shifts. Beefheart's precise orchestrations are blueprints for entropy. Even the instrumentation sounds a little strange; the Magic Band's guitars play unidiomatic lines (composed on keyboard) using clunky heavy-gauge strings. Harmony? Melody? Well, you can hum every riff and some of the Captain's vocal lines, but forget chord changes and harmonic motion. Like Stravinsky, Van Vliet juggles little musical cells that sound tonal but go nowhere; even if a Beefheart song generally hangs around one chord, it'll manage to end up elsewhere. Beefheart is a lot more complex and polyrhythmic than Stravinsky—Igor liked to make the beat jump, but the Captain kicks it four ways at once. And Beefheart's music has more funk—in every definition—than Stravinsky ever dreamed of.

At least, that's what happens in grade-A premium Beefheart, which in order of (my) preference includes *Lick My Decals Off, Baby; Trout Mask Replica; Clear Spot;* and *Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller). Doc at the Radar Station* belongs next to *Trout Mask Replica.* It's not as dense, funny, or sexy as *Decals,* not as rangy and vociferous as *Trout Mask,* and its lyrics aren't as cosmological as *Clear Spot's* or *Shiny Beast's,* but it's as brilliant an album as anyone has released this year. There's a new undertone of anger, urgency, even paranoia; most of the voices Beefheart uses on the album are crabbed, enraged, terrified. Although the music seems stripped-down at first, there's far more polyrhythm and outright oddity (like the intro to "Dirty Blue Gene," which takes off at a fearsome clip with rhythm-guitar chords, only to stop dead just before the vocal) than on 1978's genial *Shiny Beast.* And Beefheart's expanded his sonic vocabulary to include string synthesizer (a mixed blessing, but it's the only quasi-lyrical instrument on the album), Chinese gongs, and more chording (with no more tonality). Beefheart may feel like *a man on a porcupine fence,* as he declaims in "Ashtray Heart," but with any luck he'll continue to keep entropy at bay.—*Jon Pareles*

POLYROCK
(RCA)
THE DANCE
Dance for Your Dinner,
(Dist. by Rough Trade)
THE ESCALATORS,
Escalators,
(Dist. by CBS Canada)

These three records all connect to what is preceived as the Talking Heads/New York Art Rock axis. Which is to say they draw on "funk" rhythms (meaning the emphasis is on the upbeat, *one* two *three* four), and concentrate on instrumental texture as opposed to more traditional pop concerns, using melodies, lyrics and voices ornamentally. Talking Heads themselves transcend these definitions, but they exemplify publicly all the tense-sounding, soul-influenced white pop experimenters.

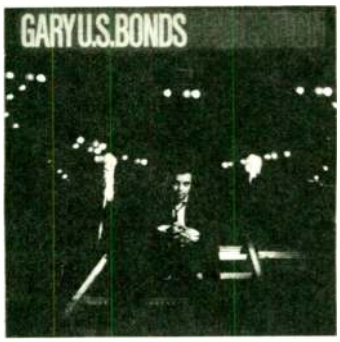
A big noise has been made about *Polyrock,* the only U.S. major label release here, because "serious" avant-grade composer Philip Glass is the producer. It's a very clean, well made, smart record but other than that could only be deemed interesting as a series of exercises in guitar interplay at mildly amphetamine tempos, like background music to a down film about robot life in the shiny grey future. For devotees of structure, yes, perhaps; for anyone else, no.

The Dance boasts the talents of Fred Maher, New York's most insistently danceable polyrhythmic new drummer. The auteurs involved are Eugenie Diserio and Steve Alexander, of the late Model Citizens. The former's voice is oddly appealing and this band knows how to string together squeals and jabs of dissonance from guitars, saxes, and keys into hooks, though it's not all AM jellosound for sure. The key bits are always the lunging

bass and ever-shifting jungle-beat drums. Catchy.

The Escalators are last year's Rhythm Method, of "Alligators Have Fun" indie 45 fame, plus Talking Head Jerry Harrison. Leader Busta Jones is an eminent funk bassman (the real thing) and presently a semi-official Head, one of the group of luminaries who may be touring with Byrne et al. History aside, the Escalators seem to be a good-time diversion for all involved, a party record. It contains a fine wacko sax and synth-spiced version of "Wooly Bully." Imagine the Ohio Players making a tough New Wave DOR disc—that sort of stomping ebullience applied to neat little rock riffs. Nobody's straining, but jump back jack anyway—hot stuff.

—Van Gosse



GARY U.S. BONDS
Dedication
(EMI America)
SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY AND THE ASBURY JUKES
Reach Up and Touch the Sky
(Mercury)

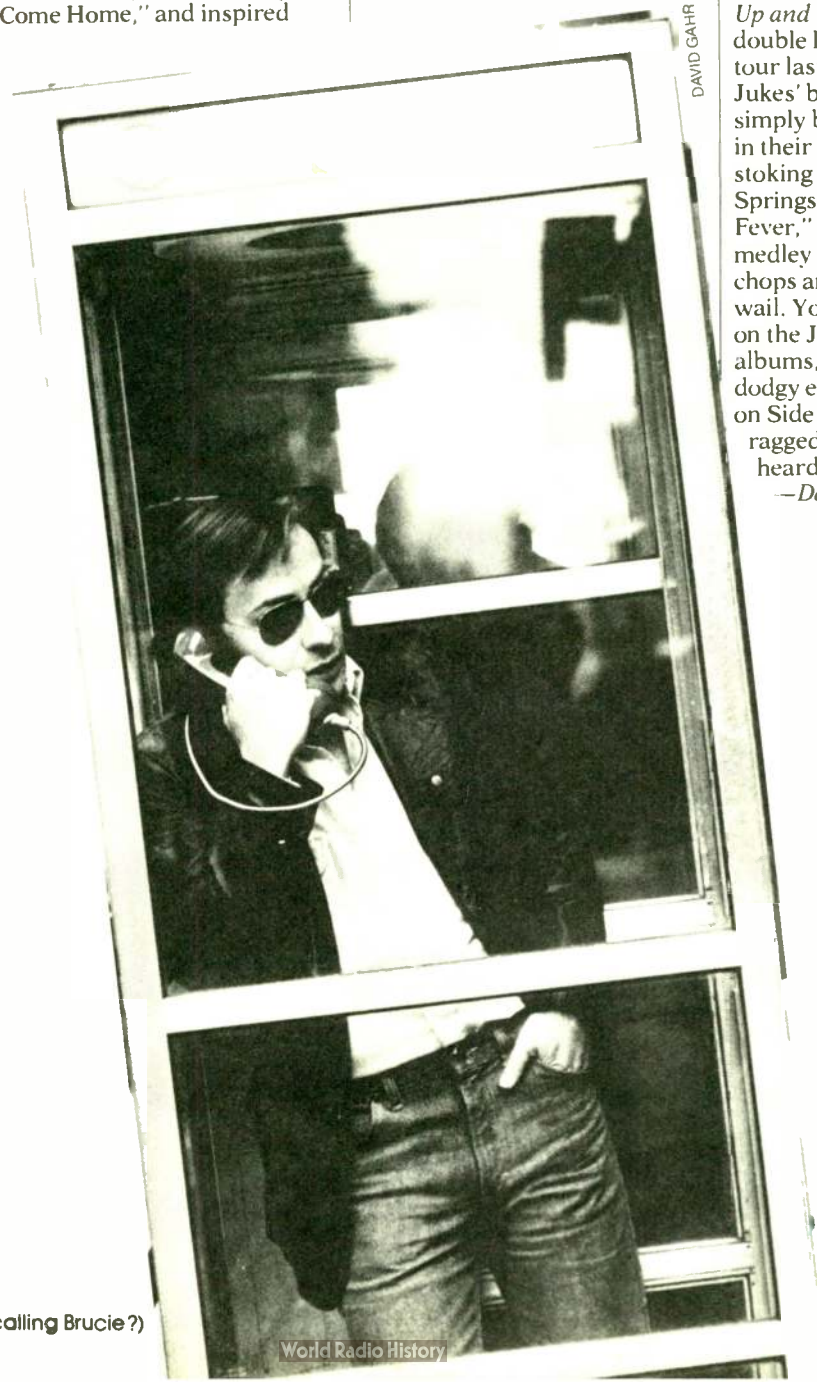
Everything Bruce Springsteen touches seems to turn into, well, Bruce Springsteen. The first few albums by Asbury Park soul brother Southside Johnny, Patti Smith's hit version of "Because the Night," and now the comeback album by 50s R&B raver Gary U.S. Bonds all bear the indelible Springsteen brand—that sound of drums going off like a 21-gun salute, bathroom echo as deep as the Grand Canyon, and the erotic melodic curves of his songhooks cut from the stone of American rock 'n' roll's foundations (Berry, Presley, Spector, Motown) and sanded with guitar/keyboard textures cut from *Blonde on Blonde*.

Instead of merely creating other artists' records in his own image, Springsteen invariably brings out the best in his subjects. Gary U.S. Bonds' *Dedication*—co-produced with E-Streeter Miami Steve Van Zandt—is no exception. Both Springsteen and Miami Steve have refrained from simply rewriting Bonds' classic party records "Quarter to Three" and "New Orleans," songs that have long been a part of Springsteen's live set. Rather, they have given Bonds songs he can sink his teeth into—modern frat-party rockers like "This Little Girl" and "Dedication," the five-star Miami Steve ballad "Daddy's Come Home," and inspired outside stuff like the Beatles' "It's Only Love" and Dylan's "From a Buick 6"—and beefing them up with "That Sound," topping it off with Clarence Clemon's honky sax, the blowsy Asbury Jukes horns, and on "Your Love" backup vocals by soul men Ben E. King and Chuck Jackson.

Bonds rises to the occasion like a champ, stepping into the Cajunized country standard "Jole Blon" and the revved-up version of Jackson Browne's "The Pretender" with the snarling grit of Bob Seger, the resonance of Dobie Gray, and the Baptist passion of Otis Redding. No mere shadow of his former self, Bonds sings like a man who has twenty-years to make up for and when Springsteen joins him for a verse on "Jole Blon" it's like hearing lightning strike twice. Springsteen no doubt wanted to produce Bonds because of the way songs like "Quarter to Three" changed his life and believed Bonds had it in him to do it again to another generation of rockers. On *Dedication*, Bonds justifies that faith and then some.

Sixties soul revisionist Southside Johnny has long since stepped out from the shadow of Springsteen, although his last two albums *The Jukes* and *Love Is A Sacrifice* suffered from a lyrical and stylistic overreach that muted the basic R&B blast of the band. But *Reach Up and Touch the Sky*—a double live salvo cut on a U.S. tour last summer—is the Jukes' best album to date simply because it is the Jukes in their element, on a stage stoking Jukes originals, a few Springsteen staples like "The Fever," and a Sam Cooke medley with their hot bar-band chops and Johnny's 100 proof wail. You've heard it all before on the Jukes' five studio albums, but even in spite of dodgy editing (the encores are on Side One) and occasionally ragged sound, you've never heard it so good.

—David Fricke


DAVID GAHR

Southside Johnny (calling Brucie?)

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS
Talk, Talk, Talk
(Columbia)

Talk, Talk, Talk is an appropriately sarcastic title for an album that comes on like one long sneer. Echoing the early punk bands, The Psychedelic Furs have always painted just about everything pitch black. But on this second album, with its much condensed, crueler music, there's more reason to buy some of the extremes of the band's kvetchy stance. This time there's a real *middle* to the sound, inhabited by lots of biting guitar, blaring sax and glorious echo. On the Furs' likeably crude first album it was mostly Richard Butler's great Son-of-Johnny-Rotten snarling vocals up front and a firm backbeat kicking in from behind. The guitars were often smeared in between like some vague, ambient drone. Here everything is faster and tighter, with some new steel reinforced guitar work. (Check out the rousing riffs in "Pretty In Pink".) The Furs' drone chants now have more punch and they haven't sacrificed their subtleties—like the Death-In-Venice shadings to Duncan Kilburn's sax and their haunting minor melodies. The Sex Pistols meet Roxy Music.

Richard Butler's lyrics, delivered with his unrelentingly accusatory vocals, have been upgraded as well. He's more specific and personal this time around. (Last time he used the word "stupid" some 13 times and "useless" no less than 14, sometimes overstepping the bounds of purposeful disgust, stumbling into the realm of easy-bake nihilism.) Here he concentrates on relationships. The only problem is he's so busy attacking the conventions, institutions and misuses of love that he makes the assault seem more important than the real problem of finding or even feeling love itself. Only in one song does he seem to really *care* about a lover—in "All Of This Or Nothing", which is about a broken relationship. The rest is mostly distancing put-downs, like "She Is Mine" where his contempt for other people's idea of love seems to abort his own search.

Ultimately, though, Butler's viciousness (which at times borders on anti-sexuality) comes across as charmingly, if obnoxiously, adolescent. In a word—punky. It's broad to be sure, but that's the same angle that helped make the first album so likeable. Now with the more powerfully angry music here, the effect is doubled. Some of the band's talk may still seem rote or shallow. But in their action there's a certain truth.
—Jim Farber

ANNE FISHBEIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Richard Butler of the P-Furs

DAVID JOHANSEN
Here Comes the Night
(Blue Sky)

SYL SYLVAIN
& THE TEARDROPS
Syl Sylvain & the Teardrops
(RCA)

The New York Dolls flouted the rock business world with their untamed, flamboyant unprofessionalism. Though the time (1971-1975) was wrong for their own success, the Dolls' inspired amateurism paved the way for the 1976 New York punk scene which in turn triggered the 1977 London punk explosion.

As the terms imply, however, you can't remain an amateur or non-professional if you play music for money very long. No matter how you fight it, you grow more and more accomplished. Some musicians (the Clash, Lou Reed, Johnny Lydon) adjust to this inevitable transition; others (the Ramones, Patti Smith, Sid Vicious) don't. Of the surviving Dolls, David Johansen and Sylvain Sylvain are the two who have matured gracefully into professionalism.

That professionalism has produced new solo albums—*Syl Sylvain & the Teardrops* and Johansen's *Here Comes the Night*—that are surprisingly mainstream. Many old Dolls fans may find such pop professionalism a bitter betrayal, but the less sectarian should enjoy the albums as perfect car cruisin' music.

Syl Sylvain & the Teardrops is the easier of the two to like, because the mainstream Sylvain chooses is 1963 teen party songs. Remember, the New York Dolls second and last album, *Too Much, Too Soon*, was produced by Shadow Morton, who had played Phil Spector for the Shangri-Las, Ad-Libs and Dixie Cups in 1964. The bohemian sock hop promised by that collaboration is finally realized on Sylvain's self-produced second solo album.

All ten cuts are so simple, bright and danceable that the album could be a Golden Oldies collection from 1963. The Teardrops (platinum blonde drummer Rosie Rex and greaser bassist Danny "Tubby" Reid) play a brisk, bouncy rhythm and sing sweet "girl group" syllables. The key to the album's authentic sound is Tommy Mandel, whose perfect piano arrangements flesh out Sylvain's simple hooks as Jack Nitzche's once did for Spector.

The requirements for great party records are singalong melodies and the sense that the musicians are twisting away amid crepe paper even as they record. Sylvain comes through on both counts. The ultimate example is "No Dancin'," where Sylvain tells his girlfriend he won't dance with her anymore and then taunts her with the most danceable music imaginable—full of Latin horns, berserk piano and drunken shouts.

David Johansen's *Here Comes the Night* is harder to like because the mainstream he chooses is modern AOR hard rock. He plays hi-tech power-pop full of mechanical guitars and keyboards in the

style of the Cars and Cheap Trick. That he invests the style with more personality than anyone else may not be enough for those who detest the whole genre.

Johansen takes full advantage of the genre's one asset—its surging sense of larger-than-life power—and subverts the rest. The surge is provided by guitarist Blondie Chaplin, the aforementioned keyboardist Tommy Mandel and Johansen's co-producer, Barry Mraz, who once worked with Styx. The subversion is provided by Johansen's gruff, soulful vocals and his slyly mocking lyrics.

Johansen co-wrote 7 of the 11 tunes with Chaplin, who also supplied the backing vocals and production assistance. Chaplin was one of the two South African blacks who joined the Beach Boys in 1972. Chaplin cut a Rolling Stones-style solo album in 1977, and has been a highlight of Rick Danko's live shows since 1979. Thus his move to hard rock is as unexpected as Johansen's, but he proves a powerful guitarist and songwriter.

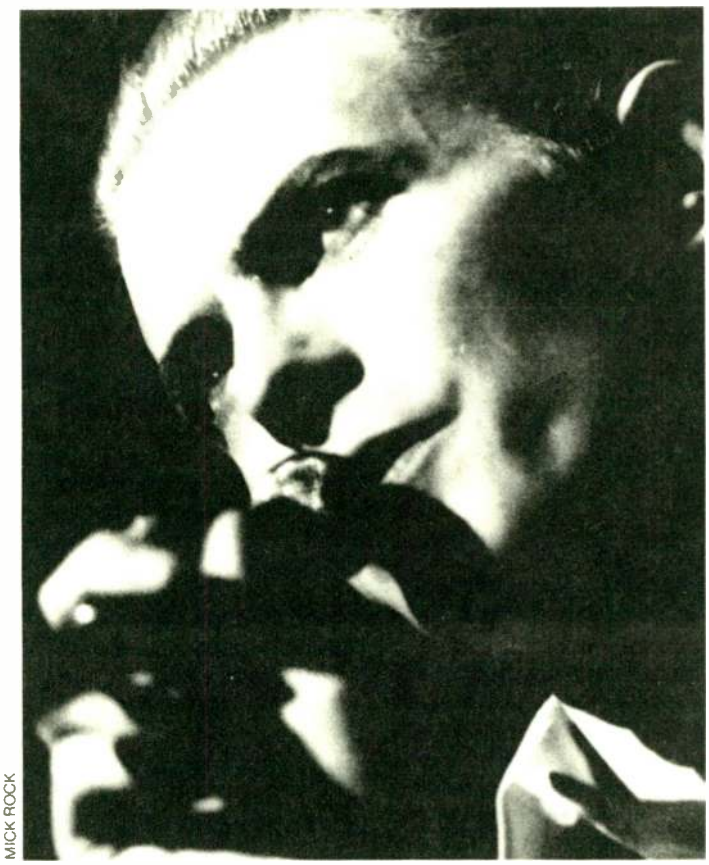
Typical of the album's streamlined power is the title tune. Chaplin introduces each section with a different high-powered, catchy riff. Johansen gives the verses a growl of anticipation and then leaps into the title cry, *Here comes the night!* with the momentum of inevitability. The song has the speed and excitement of a good movie car chase, but is as empty of thought or subtlety.

As well as Johansen and Chaplin do hard rock, it is a limited genre and gets a bit tiresome after nine straight doses. So it's quite a relief when the album's last two songs depart the formula. The light-hearted calypso of "Rollin' Job" and the soulful ballad, "Heart of Gold," are the record's two richest cuts.

Johansen and Sylvain have remained good friends, often playing and writing together when circumstances permit. Johansen's record features two of Sylvain's former colleagues in the Criminals, and both records use Tommy Mandel. Sylvain's album features the Johansen-Sylvain tune, "Formidable," a high school romance tale with pregnancy as the issue. Johansen's album contains the Johansen-Sylvain song, "Bohemian Love Pad," which sends up outsiders' notions of the Dolls' lifestyle.

One gets the sense that Johansen and Sylvain felt cheated by the Dolls' failure to achieve the stardom predicted for them. Their persistence in surviving within the industry may stem from nothing more than a lust for revenge.

—Geoffrey Himes



MICK ROCK

DAVID BOWIE
Scary Monsters
(RCA)

David Bowie is a hall of mirrors. By constantly refracting his mythology into double images and illusions, he'll occasionally serve as a reflecting pool for our (?) aspirations and fantasies. But take a look around. Who do you see? Which one is the real David Bowie? I wonder, after all the transformations, if even he knows. Or cares.

I am banned from the event/I really don't understand the situation/so what's the moral, sings Bowie on "It's No Game" (first in Japanese, then in English), a stark prologue and epilogue to what may be his last pop album, a concession to all the eternal adolescents in his audience experiencing teenage mid-life, yearning for the operatic cosmology of Ziggy Stardust. And though *Scary Monsters* teases the pop audience with a slight return to the *Hunky Dory/Diamond Dogs/Young Americans* days (filtered through the jagged prism of the Eno-Bowie trilogy *Heroes/Low/Lodger*), Bowie withholds the reassurance that there is some sort of Starman waiting to relieve us of our burden. As Barbara Graustark pointed out, *Scary Monsters* is the first Bowie album in which he acknowledges a sense of his own mortality. The resulting pastiche of music and imagery is uneven, though not unpleasing.

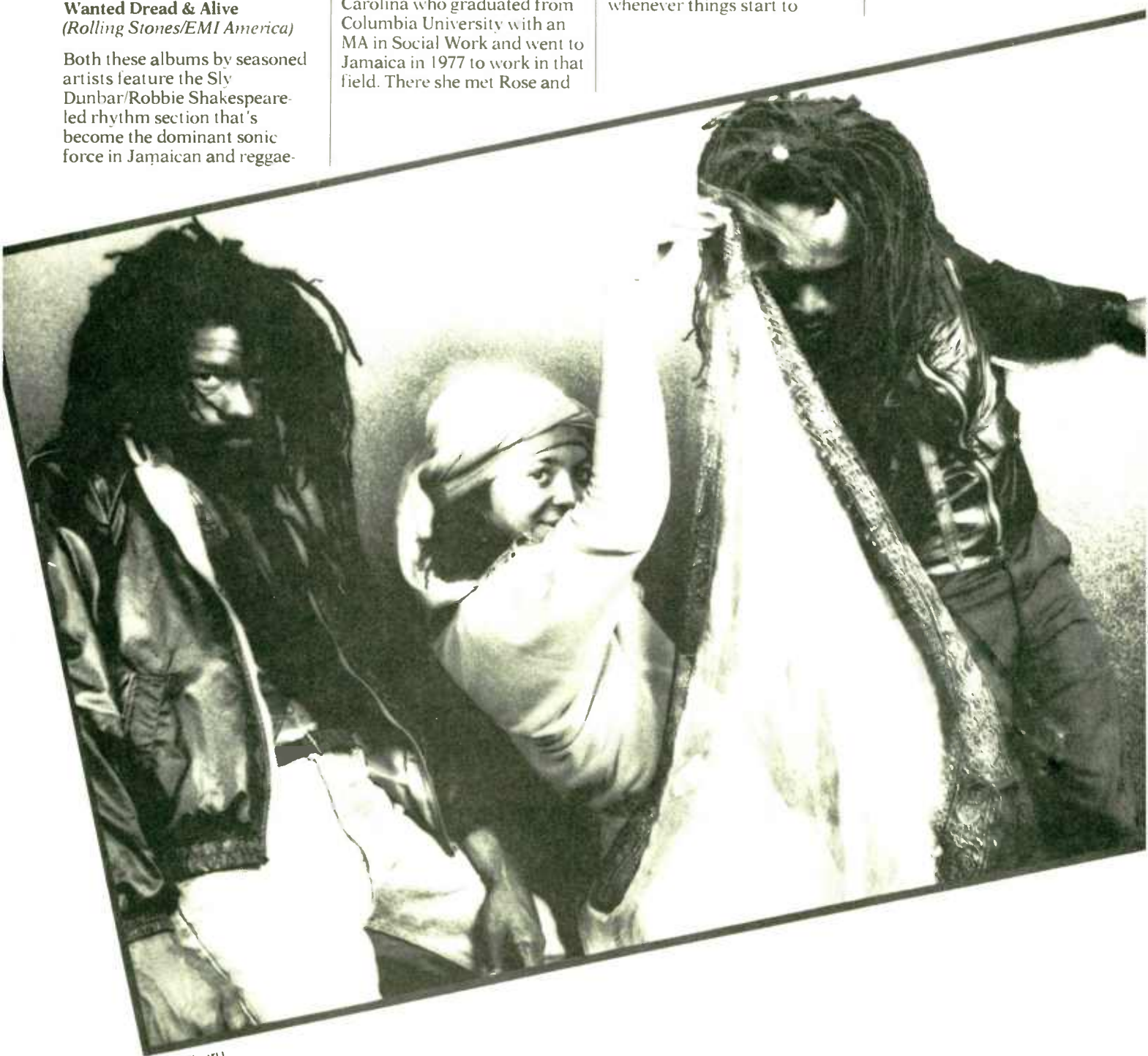
Bowie's strongest suite has always been as an arranger, and *Scary Monsters* finds him moving away from the wide-open, pan-ethnic stylings of *Lodger* (his finest achievement) towards a dense wall of sound, painstakingly embellished with studio effects (such as the repetitive keyboard drones on "Because You're Young" and the shimmering, otherworldly synthesizers on "Ashes To Ashes"); for added interest there's the polytonal power of Robert Fripp, turning in some of his most unself-conscious, electrifying guitar solos in years. It's good thing the music is so strong, because the songs are often the-childlike homilies of "Up The Hill Backwards," the vague danger of the title tune, the operatic pomp of "Teenage Wildlife;" and on his one cover tune ("Kingdom Come") Bowie completely misses the point of Tom Verlaine's majestic Americana, parodying the song like a drag queen. The standout songs, in addition to the epilogue of "It's No Game," are the spatial "Ashes To Ashes" (an almost oriental reggae groove with Bowie's Major Tom reflecting sadly on the plight of those locked into *someone else's* mission), and the new wavish dance tune "Fashion" (an R&B cousin of "Fame" which calls disco to account for its bland trendiness and overtones of fascism).

In short, I listen to *Scary Monsters* a lot, but when you go beyond the music and analyze Bowie's concerns it gets kind of thin. *Draw the blinds on yesterday/And it's all so much scarier,* Bowie cautions, but as the body of work he's produced since *Young Americans* shows, he's much more than just a teenage icon—and he knows it, too.—*Chip Stern*

BLACK UHURU:
Red
(Island/Mango)
PETER TOSH:
Wanted Dread & Alive
(Rolling Stones/EMI America)

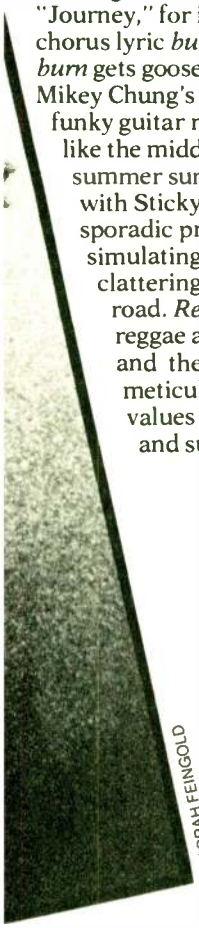
Both these albums by seasoned artists feature the Sly Dunbar/Robbie Shakespeare-led rhythm section that's become the dominant sonic force in Jamaican and reggae-influenced music today. Oddly, both LPs signal shifts in direction for the artists involved; not so strange, however, is the fact that the same mighty rhythm section holds both projects together, deftly mixing convincing Ja music with enough studio subtlety and driving grooves to throughly satisfy loyal fans and probably snag some new ones to boot.

Black Uhuru is a vocal trio that includes Michael Rose, Puma Jones and Derrick Simpson aka Ducky. Ms. Jones is an American from South Carolina who graduated from Columbia University with an MA in Social Work and went to Jamaica in 1977 to work in that field. There she met Rose and Simpson, veterans of the island's hotel club gig circuit and local recording scene. She had already done some back-up singing for Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus, so when the trio formed, it was ready to record immediately. Enter Sly and Robby as producers, and a string of singles introduced Black Uhuru to the Jamaican and English markets. The group's first album in '79, the euphorically-titled *Sinsemilla*, combined your basic modified dub rhythm track—thick slabs of reverb on the drums and sound effects thrown in whenever things start to sag—with some genuinely haunting melodies and lyrics. On this second LP, *Red*, the producers have toned down much of the reverb and tightened up the grooves, emphasizing rather than camouflaging the repetitiousness of the music by sinking harder into the backbeat. Meanwhile, the trio's vocals have been raised in the mix so that the dreamy chant-melodies ride on the music rather than swim underneath



Black Uhuru

it; these are droning melodies, to be sure, that draw on European and African folk sources, each song pitched inexorably in a minor mode. But BU's lyrics—admirably printed this time on the LP's posterior—are not so repetitive, and the verbal gush here, as Rose banters back and forth with Puma and Ducky, somehow manages to be grim and zany at the same time. On "Sponji Reggae," Rose used his euphonious squawk to great advantage on lines like these: *Some say I am nuts zooky crazy/Want I to leave the music alone/They say go and look work I and I are lazy/But I think for a while and say to my self/It's a time for every style . . .* And for every foreboding utterance from Rose's lips, the band supplies an equally bizarre but utterly musical running commentary. On "Journey," for instance, the chorus lyric *burn brimstone burn* gets goosed along by Mikey Chung's maniacally funky guitar riff that sounds like the midday Caribbean summer sun beating down, with Sticky Thompson's sporadic precussion blasts simulating stones clattering on a dusty road. *Red* is minimalist reggae at its funky best, and the album's meticulous production values greatly enhance and sustain Black Uhuru's somber naturalistic scenarios.


DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Peter Tosh has been playing with the Dunbar/Shakespeare rhythm axis for years; they were founding members of his original back-up band after Tosh left Marley and the Wailers. These players may have recently produced and played on such funk-nouveau exotica as Grace Jones' *Nightclubbing*, but behind Tosh they give the Bush Doctor exactly what he wants. Tosh co-produces himself with his band, and he wants on his new album, *Wanted Dread and Alive*, is a more laid-back, traditionally soul-based sound than the pop-reggae he's developed over the last three years. The songs here are like mellow updates of late 60's soul hits ("The Poor Feel It" features a chorus bass line patterned after the Isley Bros. "It's Your Thing," for example), and despite the "wanted man," outlaw image on the album cover, most of this LP is really quite soothing, in the manner of Toots and the Maytals' soul-reggae fusion. "Nothing But Love" is a love ballad that Tosh sings in a near-tenor voiced duet with Gwen Guthrie, and the song's gentle lilt reenforces the links that reggae first had to such American R&B greats as Curtis Mayfield. On "Reggae-Mylitis," which is built around a basic dominant-subdominant chord progression that's been at the heart of gospel, soul and country for eons, Robbie Shakespeare ingeniously refines and reworks his bassline without once losing the song's slow funk pulse. On *Wanted Dread & Alive* Peter Tosh breaks it back down to the original, sweetly sun-drenched grooves that he, Marley and Bunny Wailer first fashioned out of the American pop radio R&B that drifted down from the Gulf Coast.—*Crispin Cioe*

REGGAE COLLECTIONS
The King Kong Compilation
(Mango)
SLY AND ROBBIE PRESENT TAXI
(Mango)

Jamaican pop music has had a very distinct, even intricate history all its own, full of rhythmic developments a ripening melodic sophistication that, heard in retrospect, form a fascinating and somewhat Byzantine musical thread. Until the 50's, the most prevalent pop musical form on the island was mento, a riotous, uptempo mixture of English folk song and sea chanteys calypso, and African rhythms that had survived completely intact from before the days of slavery. With increasing industrialization and bauxite mining in the late 50's, however, came a more urban, American R&B influence, resulting in ska music. Two excellent and recent Mango collections document the ska era, *Intensified! Original Ska 1962-1966* and *More Intensified! Original Ska 1963-1967*, when fast, horn-laden productions ruled the island and yielded its first international hits as well. Now two new Mango compilations trace two subsequent eras in Jamaican pop, and if anything, these albums are even more illuminating as regards the music's global influence.

The quasi-legendary Jamaican summer of 1966, with record high temperatures and dryness, supposedly ended the furious ska dancing craze on the island and set the stage for the much cooler rock-steady and reggae beats that followed. *The King Kong Compilation* picks up that change around 1968, centering on the productions of one Leslie Kong, a Chinese Jamaican record store owner-turned producer, and an early partner of Island/Mango Records founder Chris Blackwell. Gone now were the hysterical horns, distorted guitars and seemingly haphazard vocals that lent ska its charm and craziness; instead, Kong featured tasty organ fills, a relaxed beat, sweetly precise backup vocals, skanking guitars "chickas" on the backbeats, and perhaps most important, a heavy-duty bass sound that nailed down the grooves without being frantic. Desmond Dekker and the Aces' "Israelites," which leads off the compilation, was a big 1968 hit in the U.S., combining the ever-present Jamaican religiosity with this new production style to great advantage. Other treats here, depicting the "King Kong" sound in all its laid-back glory, include the Melodians' "Rivers of Babylon" (which became a huge hit remake for Boney M in the late 70's), the Pioneers' relentlessly grooving "Long Shot Kick De Bucket," and a very young Toots and the Maytals doing the song that first charted them, the churning "Monkey Man." A new one on me, but a delightful surprise, is the passionate "Bitterness of Life" by Bruce Ruffin, which is such a great tune that it fairly begs to be covered today.

Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare are of course the premier drums/bass duo to have emerged from the Jamaican music scene; *Sly and Robbie Present Taxi* is a compendium of their equally impressive production triumphs via their own Taxi label, which is distributed by Island/Mango worldwide. The songs here are all fairly recent, with Sheila Hylton's version of the Police tune "The Bed's Too Big Without You" still on the charts in Jamaica. As producer/players, Sly and Robbie are about using empty space to maximum advantage. For instance, the dub track on the late General Echo's "Drunken Master" has only bass, minimal drum kit and slight, percussive guitar sounds—but the groove is thick and absolutely undeniable. Even the more arranged songs here, like Dennis Brown's "Sitting and Watching," which features a relentless upbeat syndrum, have the basic Sly/Robbie rock-solid beat as the firmament on which the more ornate electronic touches depend. This album very much depicts the sound of popular reggae today, in Jamaica and worldwide, and the Dunbar-Shakespeare team has also produced such pop-reggae hits as "Don't Look Back." by Peter Tosh/Mick Jagger, "Sinsemilla" by Black Uhuru, and "Soon Forward" by Gregory Isaacs. Taken together, these two compilations albums nicely trace reggae's formative years through its most recent and cosmopolitan incarnation. And the fact that the music has survived, grown and refined itself over the last 15 years is proof enough that it's here to stay.—*Crispin Cioe*

GEORGE HARRISON
Somewhere in England
(Dark Horse)

The title alone says that for all the cataclysmic events of the past year, the music continues to emanate from a vague, idyllic, and safe place. As save-the-world-and-pass-the-karma baggage, *Somewhere in England* is almost defiant in its insignificance. By comparison to some of this material, Kafka's K would feel at home in Crackerbox Palace.

Nevertheless—perhaps for the very reasons stated above—*Somewhere in England* is Harrison's most consistently entertaining LP in years. For a change, Harrison doesn't weigh down flimsy material with muddled mysticism or drollery until it sags like an over-decorated Christmas tree branch. In fact, the tunes that would seem to have the most potential for heavy-heartedness and empty-headedness are among the most infectious ("That Which I Have Lost," "All Those Years Ago").

Moving even further afield, Harrison displays a remarkable flair for the AM pop arrangement a la Wings ("Teardrops," "Unconsciousness Rules").

Lyrics like *He is fighting the forces of darkness* are Rocky Raccoon rather than Dante, more Mickey Mouse than Maharishi.

With Harrison's restrained guitar work and vocals the constants, a group of veteran pop sessionmen, including Tom Scott, Denny Lane and Ringo, are shuffled in and out to good effect. The Scott horn solo on "Unconsciousness Rules," for example, helps rescue the song from Captain & Tennillism.

Finally, as homage to old friend and mentor John Lennon, George Harrison has written a bouncy pop ditty that doesn't belabor the point. It's a much more effective tack than rewriting "Give Peace a Chance," and it's emblematic of Harrison's approach to what could have been a difficult album project.

Somewhere in England knows its place.—*Mark Mehler*

opposed to, say, the corner of 72nd St. and Central Park West.

Somewhere in England, in the case of George Harrison's music, has generally been a murky region of the imagination somewhere between tantric pop and dull-witted whimsy. And the new album does nothing to clarify the boundaries of his artistic intent. Though it ostensibly carries the familiar

YOKO ONO
Season of Glass
(Geffen)

It would have been easy for Yoko Ono to go into seclusion after John Lennon's assassination and rest on the laurels of the record she shared with him, *Double Fantasy*. That was Ono's first record that was not universally made an object of ridicule by a hostile and narrow-minded rock press. Instead Yoko bravely put herself on the line by immediately going into the studio to cut *Season of Glass*, easily the best record she's ever made.

It's chilling to hear Yoko sing a straight, blues-based lament, "Goodbye Sadness," at the start, pitching her emotion-strained voice against Michael Brecker's beautiful, crying saxophone break. The dirge-like spirit continues, building through the record until it climaxes in the terrifying nightmare vision of "Dogtown," then reaches a peak of furious recrimination in the raging "I Don't Know Why."

In a music scene where Patti Smith and Deborah Harry define the acceptable range of hip female vocalists Yoko Ono could certainly be considered a major force. In 1968 she was making far more adventurous records than a lot of what passes for avant grade rock today.

I've heard respected critics say that *Season Of Glass* is some kind of proof that Yoko is still trying to capitalize on her association with John Lennon. After over a decade of demonstrating her love for Lennon while Beatles fans brutally insulted her, this criticism seems especially stupid and vain. Truly, the undeniable emotion conveyed by *Season Of Glass* should be a final admonishment to those crass enough to view Yoko as some kind of golddigger.

—*John Swenson*

VAN HALEN
Fair Warning
(Warner Brothers)

The generally accepted notion of guitar heroics holds that heavy metal is a *lead* guitarist's

forum. Practice and history, however, suggest another conclusion. Despite the preponderance of guitar solos in heavy metal music, its principal function is as a rhythm instrument, setting up and repeating the basic riff or riffs around which a song is constructed. The rhythm guitar provides both the body of the sound, and the basic harmonic direction, while the vocals supply the melodic interest. Guitar solos and fills are essentially secondary to the stylistic requirements of heavy metal, which perhaps explains the current popularity of H.M. bands that either limit or exclude guitar solos.

Which bring us to Van Halen's *Fair Warning*. From the opening flash of distortion-charged harmonics, guitarist Eddie Van Halen clearly dominates the album. This is pretty much true to form, as is the fact that, with occasional exceptions, all his playing is devoted to rhythm work. But what makes *Fair Warning* more than just another way for 16-year olds to waste their money is that Eddie Van Halen approaches his rhythm work with an intensity and invention that's usually reserved for lead work.

The structure of most heavy metal songs is predictably rigid. Riffs are deployed with maddening symmetricality, verse-chorus form is adhered to as if sacrimental, and once tonic has been established it is stuck to like glue (unless the last verse is modulated up a key for flash). Much of *Fair Warning*, however, boasts a surprising fluidity in its structural ideas. Once Van Halen (the group) has established a riff, Van Halen (the guitarist) often as not will move on to another idea. More significantly, the instrumental tracks generally seem to lead, with David Lee Roth's vocals added on almost as commentary. Where the song structure is most conservative, on "So This is Love?" and "Push Comes to Shove," the results are fairly predictable; but where guitar and vocals take almost independant directions, as on "Mean Street," "Unchained," and the remarkable " 'Dirty Movies'," the effect is devastating.

Term-paper talk aside, the main thing Van Halen has to offer is energy—the "why" behind all of heavy metal's "what" and "how." But where previous albums offered brawn at the expense of brain, *Fair Warning* turns in an impressive combination of melodic savvy and sonic excess. Needless to say, the general tone tends to run along the lines of loud and obnoxious, just as surely as David Lee Roth continues to cultivate his tough-asshole persona.

But so what? if what you want is progressive gentility, pour yourself a cup of tea and listen to Genesis. If, on the other hand, you want to listen to some hard rock that assumes the listener is smarter than the average lap dog, this is the album for you.

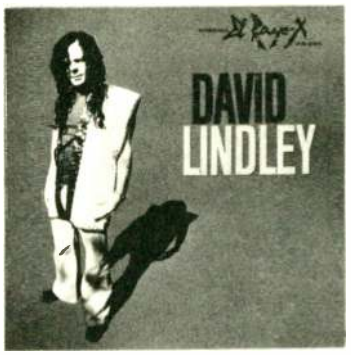
—J.D. Consodine

PUBLIC IMAGE LTD.
Flowers of Romance
(Warners)

Just as The Sex Pistols tried to deny history in '76 by stating there was "no future," so Public Image began in '78 by presenting themselves as having "no past." John Lydon (the human being) did everything he could to disown Johnny Rotten (the revolutionary symbol). Likewise, the first PiL album begged to be seen as something without precedent—definitely *not* rock 'n' roll. Of course the album not only contained very good rock 'n' roll (with even a few Pistols influences) but more importantly, retained Lydon's familiar accusatory stance. It was only on the follow-up, *Second Edition*, that PiL really began a grave new world of possibilities. The music was now totally successful as experimentation—a locust horde of dub-like creepy-crawl bass and drums plus Keith Levene's semi-psychedelic guitar and a vocal like some submerged yelp from the nausea of the soul. Nonetheless, Lydon was still looking over his shoulder at his Rotten past and had elevated his own persona to thematic importance in his own lyrics.

The new twist for *Flowers of Romance* is that the band has finally put Pistols references and even Lydon as an individual behind them, and the results are a less satisfying but still very worthwhile PiL to swallow. The music is more disorienting than ever, with no bass (an oddly sensual touchstone last time) and very little of Levene's influential, decaying guitar. It's a much less hazy production as well, with a sharp spotlight falling on Martin Atkins' drums (tribal beats from the bush of ghosts) and Lydon's vocals (his incredible range of witch doctor rapping). The music, which includes mid-eastern touches on two tracks, is almost as compelling as *Second Edition*, but it is the de-emphasis of the lyrics which most helps dissolve Lydon into this newly unified PiL. Generic emotion (file under "dread" like last time) has replaced specific character study, with vague words wholly reliant on the music for meaning. The results can be disappointing not only to followers of the cult-of-personality (like yours truly) but also to anyone hoping for language as inventive as that on *Second Edition*. (Here there are actually lines like *doom sits in gloom in his room*.) Also, when Lydon pronounces certain negative words ("destroy," "vile," "stinking"—take your pick), it sometimes seems like an empty parody of his former self.

Still, most of the lyrics at least rate as appropriately atmospheric, and the new, more purely musical group has its own rewards. The almost English traditional percussion of "Phenagon" or what sounds like insects masticating in "Four Enclosed Walls" are all organically matched to Lydon's warbles, establishing a mood of truth. An undeniable horror world is created—one which truly has no past and no future.—*Jim Farber*



DAVID LINDLEY
El Rayo-X
(Asylum)

Over the past 10 years, multi-instrumentalist David Lindley has earned a reputation as rock's ultimate accompanist. Backing the likes of Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor, Crosby-Nash and, more notably, Jackson Browne, Lindley has proved himself an extremely flexible player while remaining highly individual and easily identifiable. Because of this, his debut solo album, *El Rayo-X*, suffers from none of the stigmas ordinarily associated with sideman-goes-solo LPs—lack of direction, weak vocals, endless soloing. Instead, the guitarist has crafted a cohesive, highly original record consisting of twelve compact catchy tunes (all vocals) with very little soloing for the sake of showing off.

Despite Lindley's eclectic tastes and talents (he can play just about anything with strings on it, in about any idiom on the planet), he purposely didn't make a "Whitman's Sampler." The diverse influences are all there, but are filtered through Lindley's "Topanga Canyon reggae" sound, as he calls it—a little like Ry Cooder's *Bop Till You Drop* (which David played on) but a lot more focused.

There's an "up" feel to virtually everything on the album—from the ska version of "Twist and Shout" to the calypso-flavored title cut to the Cajun waltz "Petit Fleur" (featuring Lindley on fiddle). The beautiful reggae arrangement of "Bye Bye Love" would make a perfect soundtrack to a slow, deliberate cruise down Sunset.

Despite his ties to L.A.'s "mellow mafia," Lindley manages to exhibit restraint without getting *too* laid back. Bar after bar of "Ain't No Way," "Don't Look Back" and "Bye Bye Love" go by with the band simply playing the changes, adding no unnecessary fills and frills. When Lindley does decide to step forward, as on "Mercury Blues," he kicks out the jams but good. (The combination of his wailing lap steel, Ian Wallace's massive drumming on Bob Glaub's freight engine bass reportedly fried one recording console during the taping of this track.)

Lindley's oddball sense of humor shines through on more than one occasion—his falsetto outburst on "Ain't No Way," the Spike Jones percussion breaks on "Tu-Ber-Cu-Lucas and the Sinus Flu," his overall choice of material—but never at the expense of good taste. Three tunes, including "She Took Off My Romeos" were composed by Lindley's friend Bob "Frizz" Fuller. If you thought Warren Zevon was weird . . .

Although a veritable who's who of rock star headliners volunteered their service when word spread that Lindley was going into studio, the core of the band on all cuts is made up of solid supportive players who are top-notch, albeit little-known. Drummer Ian Wallace and a Rastafarian percussionist named George "Baboo" Piere comprise the rhythm section, along with either Bob Glaub or Reggie McBride who alternate on bass. William "Smithy" Smith plays organ, and, with a few exceptions, Lindley plays everything else—guitar, lap steel, fiddle, 6-string bass, banduria, Turkish saz, and Irish penny whistle. Co-producer Jackson Browne (who supplies some tasteful vocal harmonies with Baboo) has outdone most of his own efforts, in terms of sound and production (thanks also to engineer/producer Greg Ladanyi).

Four stars. It probably deserves five, but I'll reserve the extra one for Lindley's follow-up. There's a lot more music where this came from.—*Dan Forte*

RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS

BUNNY WAILER
Bunny Wailer Sings the Wailers
(Mango)

Who better to recut the early Jamaican hits of the Wailers, to bring 'em back alive, than an original Wailer? You may not recognize many of the ten songs—except for Curtis Mayfield's "Keep on Moving" done Jahwise, these are all pre-*Catch A Fire*—but there's no mistaking the hot "riddim" of Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar or Bunny's evocative crooning. The beat is reggae, but the sound is pure soul.

JIMMY CLIFF
I Am The Living
(MCA)

Cliff has done more for the popularization of reggae in this country than anyone save Marley. Yet he continues to take a lot of stick from roots purists because he is more interested in writing and singing hits than praising herb and Haile Selassie in song. He deserves it for "Another Summer" and "It's the Beginning of the End," unadulterated sap. But the pulsing funk of "Morning Train" and the three tracks produced by Cliff with his regular band in Jamaica (the rest were done in California)—rousing reggae to the core—are compensation enough.

LINTON KWESI JOHNSON
L.K.J. in Dub
(Mango)

Reggae poet Johnson and his pen take a vacation while co-producer/mix-master Dennis "Blackbeard" Bovelle cooks up a dub-ble bubble stew of rhythms culled from Johnson's last two LPs *Forces of Victory* and *Bass Culture*. Johnson's powerful way with words is conspicuous by his absence, but Bovelle's way with the music is sheer poetry in motion.

THE ENGLISH BEAT
Wha 'ppen
(Sire)

The things that might have gone sour on the English Beat—their potentially narrow ska genre, their message-mongering, their stake in a movement—have all been guarded against. Significantly, the back cover snapshots show the band goofing around in some sunny clime. Their music on this LP is linked to, not fettered by, ska, and their messages are delivered (again) with a degree of lightheartedness. Singers and players are darting and fluid, and this welcome effort thumbs its nose at sophomore slump.

TOOTS and the MAYTALS
Toots Live
(Mango)

Jamaica's answer to Otis Redding caught live in London, at his best, shanking madly to the beat of a crackerjack band while longtime Maytals Raleigh Gordon and Jerry Mathias cool him off with their breezy gospel harmonies. The LP also doubles as a greatest hits package, featuring such Toots roots as "Pressure Drop," "Funky Kinston," "54-46," and their classic '60s ska hit "Monkey Man." On your feet . . . and no butts about it.

MADNESS
Absolutely
(Sire)

Forget the 2-Tone connection. This North London mob is a Pop-Tone band, setting marvelously hummable ditties to the goose-stepping kick of ska, honky sax, carousel organ, and lots of Cockney clowning. Much of the time ("Baggy Trousers," "Overdone") they sound like Ian Dury and his Blockheads in pork pie hats, which isn't bad. But every so often they hit a resounding chord ("Take It or Leave It," "In the Rain," "You Said") that is pure Madness. Are they a band for the '80s? Absolutely.

THE SEARCHERS
Love's Melodies
(Sire)

Moon Martin, John Fogerty, Will Birch of the Records, Motorsman Andy McMasters, and Alex Chilton are just a few of the ace tunesmiths who get the Searchers treatment here—crisp resonant Byrds-y guitars, snappy rhythms, and heavenly choir-like harmonies. Sure, you've heard it all done before. But rarely is it done better.

ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN
Heaven Up Here
(Sire)

This Liverpool-spawned band's accomplished atomospherics, fall just short of U2's epic sweeps; they're a tad more literate, but a tad less invocatory, than U2. Call them *old* romantics—slightly breathless, tinged with psychedelia, but direct in their playing: no irrelevant guitar noodlings, no glassy-eyed metronomic drumming. And Ian McCulloch's something-awful-is-about-to-happen vocal manner sounds like he means it.

U2
Boy
(Island)

What do you get when you combine the pop savvy of the Undertones, the angry young thrash of Public Image Ltd., and the tortured eloquence of Joy Division? The Irish quartet that made this brilliant, exhilarating record: eleven intense, yet articulate outbursts of song that together stand as the '80s answer to *My Generation.*

THE INMATES
Shot in the Dark
(Polydor)

Good taste is timeless and so is the electric rivvum'n'blooze peddled with such enthusiasm by this refreshingly unpretentious British quintet. It is often hard to tell Peter Gunn's (nee Staines) originals from the cover versions, but then it's hard to tell singer Bill Hurley's gruff imitation South Side delivery from early '60s Jagger or Gunn's six-string blazing from vintage Keef. And they score big points for disinterring the Music Machine's "Talk Talk" and the Heard's hopelessly obscure garage-band chestnut "Stop It Baby."

KOKO TAYLOR
From The Heart of A Woman
(Alligator)

Koko Taylor is a Chicago blues singer who grew up in Memphis and made her first two albums for Chess, her third for the French label Black and Blue. This is her sixth, and stylistically most diverse record, covering blues, R&B, swing. Koko is brassy, salty and earthy—she sings about waking up in Bellevue Hospital, but in "Thanks But No Thanks" she insists on buying her own drinks. Agile guitar from 26-year-old Chicago comer Criss Johnson helps keep this record sounding fresh, if not inspired.

9 BELOW ZERO
Don't Point Your Finger
(A&M)

Ah, just what the Dr. Feelgood ordered—smokey 60s electric R&B that no doubt sounds best when you're soaked with your own sweat and someone else's beer down at the Marquee. Originality is not this British quartet's strong suit, but they nevertheless win this hand with punchy riffing, Mark Feltham's iron lung blowing on harp, songwriting promise, and brawling covers of "Treat Her Right" and "Rockin' Robin." Cool name, hot stuff.

BLUES BROTHERS
Made in America
(Atlantic)

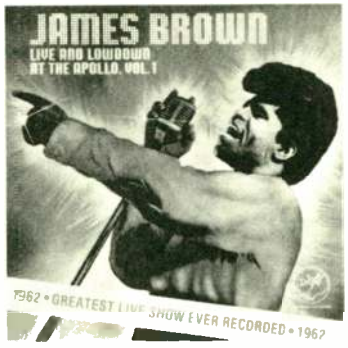
The Un-Righteous Brothers, Joliet Jake Belushi and Elwood Akroyd, wring the very last laugh — barely half a chuckle — out of their white soul shtick on their third LP (if you count the soundtrack to their multi-million dollar bomb of a movie). And they come close to losing even that after Akroyd's right-wing political babbling in the middle of "Green Onions." These guys want to be black, but they sound like a whiter shade of pale.

KATE and ANNA McGARRIGLE
French Record
(Hannibal)

In any language, the McGarrigles are a rare and beautiful thing. The fragile melodies and touching poignance of their songs is further heightened by the French-Canadian flavor of the arrangements and the organic charm of the sisters' singing. Romantic music in a Romance language.

KILLING JOKE
What's This For . . .!
(EG)

A record that's very proud of its drum sound and brittle, repetitive guitars. A production job that makes you check your needle for dust, twice. Lyrics (so far) unintelligible, but advertised as "angry." When I was a kid, they told me to eat my fish because it was brain food. I learned to like fish anyway. No so Killing Joke.



JAMES BROWN
James Brown . . . Live/Hot on the One
(Polydor)
Live and Lowdown at the Apollo, Vol. 1
(Solid Smoke)

"The Hardest Working Man in Show Business! The King of Soul! The Superstar Himself! The Undisputed King of Soul Himself! James Brown! Jaaaaammmmmes BROWN!" Recorded live in Tokyo. Brown's new double album sounds more like a pep rally than a concert, with Danny Ray, Brown's long-time M.C., shouting out the old platitudes between every other tune (or so it seems). His mono-maniacal gymnastics of hype seem awkward, sad, hopeless: the only thing that will bolster Brown's fading rep is some fresh jam, and *Hot On The One* sure ain't it.

Produced and arranged by Brown himself—after hassles with Polydor—this record was supposed to cap his comeback and win back his title of champeen of funk. Instead, it's his own Larry Holmes debacle. The grooves are more static than hypnotic; they lack the tension and depth and power than can make even the most minimal funk groove move. (Development, of course, is out of the question.) The band—his own JBs and not a studio group—sounds disarmingly anonymous: The horns light a match when what James needs is a blow-torch, the rent-a-chic back-up singers are useless, and the drummer doesn't even lock-it-in-the-pocket.

Brown himself can still dance and sweat, but his singing has faded into self-caricature. But see him live, it's all still there. And as for the repertoire, it's nothing but another xerox of his Greatest Hits—"genuine" imitation recordings of the tunes that made him famous. Brown's re-re-re-recording of old material does neither him nor us any good: it doesn't get him back on the radio, and it doesn't give us any thing but nostalgia—smokin' concert classics like *Sex Machine Live* or *Live At the Apollo Vol I.* The earliest of these two golden, nasty documents of R&B history—the October 24, 1962 Apollo date for King records—has long been out of print. And now for the good news: Solid Smoke has freed the LP from its status as collector's item by reissuing it as *Live and Lowdown.* Lowdown indeed, the 32 minute Apollo performance catches "Butane" James and His Famous Flames at their burnin' best. Arguably the most exciting act ever recorded live, the set established Brown as *the* force in black popular music. His performance is dramatic and dynamic, a far cry from the one-dimensional growling and yelping on his current release, and the Flames doo-wop, shuffle, swing, and testify like no other R&B group. *Hot On The One* pales in comparison to the Apollo date, which was recorded at a time when Brown was not only the hardest working man in show business but also the best. *—David Breskin*

DONNA SUMMER
The Wanderer
(Geffen/Warner Bros.)

The Wanderer is disco diva Donna's Inferno, a trip that will take us through her cold hell, up against fiendish temptation and out the other side to spiritual redemption. It's also her first album for David Geffen's stable of stars after bolting Neil Bogart's tottering Casablanca empire. And, from the opening synth-tones of the title track, it is clear Summer is attempting to inflate her persona to the larger-than-life station her new position demands. Within one verse, the canny symbol of disco decadence has touched on at least five potent rock 'n' roll myths: *Woke up this morning/Dragged myself across the bed/Alice went/To Wonderland/But I stayed home/Instead/I started feelin' bad/'Cause I was left behind/'Cause I'm a wanderer.* Donna effortlessly links the Beatles, Lewis Carroll, Cinderella, the "road" blues and Del Shannon as co-producer Giorgio Moroder drags that longing wistfulness coolly into the '80s. At every turn, Moroder and co-producer Pete Bellote provide their artist's yearning, chilly vocals with a calculating futuristic, mocking wall-of-muzak.

The melodies are uniformly haunting—inspirational hymns such as "Looking Up" and the oddly utopian "Grand Illusion," are delivered with the same eerie dislocation as explicit confessions like "Breakdown" and "Nightlife," in which Donna once more assumes the morally questionable role of hooker/waif. Ironically enough, the songs which seem the most literally autobiographical, like "Cold Love" and "Who Do You Think You're Foolin'," were not penned by Summer, but by Bellote. On the other hand, the most blatant attempts to make Donna into a dehumanized Black Everywoman come from Summer herself, on self-written numbers like the title track and the ill-fated Jackson Browne cum Phil Spector rock machinations of "Running For Cover." After all the charges of exploitation that have been aimed at the well-oiled Summer organization, one begins to realize the bitch herself contributes mightily to the scheme (or scam).

Nevertheless, *The Wanderer* is the work of a confident artist at the peak of her dramatic powers, a promising music of fusion to which Munich, Los Angeles, Detroit, Muscle Shoals and New York have each contributed their influence. Whether warning about the dangers of the devil or the ecstacy of belief in Jesus, Donna doesn't waver from her icy distance, and therein lies her dilemma. By rendering good and evil morally neutral, Donna Summer has stumbled upon the profound indifference of the universe, a message she delivers with stunning unawareness. In the final analysis, Donna makes salvation sound just as interesting (and boring) as sin, and perhaps that is her real leap of faith.*—Roy Trakin*

NEIL YOUNG
Hawks and Doves
(Reprise)

They don't come any flakier than Neil Young. He's written some of rock's best songs ("When You Dance") and some of its worst lines *(My head needs relatin'/not solitude),* he's got umpteen albums' worth of unreleased material already recorded, but for his first album of the '80s, coming off a Big Theme extravaganza like *Rust Never Sleeps,* what does he do but release a short (29-minute), offhand, deliberately un-epic LP with the portentously political title (and package) of *Hawks & Doves.* If it's a Statement, it's a pretty garbled one.

Oh, there are a couple of political songs. The last two cuts, "Coming Apart At Every Nail" and "Hawks & Doves," each espouse patriotism for the U.S.A. But "Coming Apart" devotes its longest verse to a slip-up at the DEW line (radar station) and argues that *The*

workin' man's in for a hell of a fight, while the title cut admits that *In history, we painted pictures grim/The devil knows we might feel that way again.* Somehow I doubt that Ron Reagan is going to find a place for Young in the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Along with the album's "message," everything else about *Hawks & Doves* is ramshackle. The melodies are straight out of Public Domain (Americana division), and the arrangements slowly gather momentum from the lone-guitar lullaby "Little Wing" (not Jimi Hendrix's song) up to the electric sorta-Cajun-sorta hillbilly "Union Man"—which is in the same key and tempo as the last two tracks, undercutting them. Most of the songs ramble along from line to line, rarely looking back to see if they're making sense; the album's longest cut, "The Old Homestead," is a shaggy-dog vision complete with naked rider, prehistoric birds, a telephone booth and the moon.

Still, I'm not complaining. The best thing about Young isn't his occasional grandiose pronouncement—who needs him to tell us that *Rock and roll will never die?*—but the way his mind leaps, non-logically, to get at a half-articulated idea. Neither the music (simple) nor the lyrics (goofy) by themselves prepare you for the imapct when Young insinuates, in "Little Wing," that *Winter is the best time of all,* or the weird humor of "Lost In Space": *Losing you/I heard I was losing you/That's not the only thing that I got to lose.* Neil Young's ramshackle, not-all-there, half-coherent songs are better because they *don't* add up, and his goofball-savant mystique is a classic of good old American individualism. Even is he is a Canuck.

—Jon Pareles

THE ROCHES
Nurds
(Warner Bros)

The Roches insist that *all* of life's various situations and entanglements—getting along at the laundromat, financial success, love relationships, the arrival of the boat people—can be reduced to an erector set simplicity. Yet they are equally uncompromising in their assurance that we react not to the facts of a situation, but to the perspectives of our far from stable vantage points. In other words, everything's relative. The songs of *Nurds* combine a telling omniscience and a subjective emotional immediacy within a musical frame work that stresses their lyrical eccentricity and the concurrent strains of humor, pathos, and sometimes anger. Suddenly emerging melodic lines are the norm; quirky key changes provide pointed commentary (especially when they are momentarily dissonant); tempos are all mixed up. Producer Roy Halee tosses in a bit more pop instrumentation than one might expect after the spareness of *The Roches* (Fripp-produced), but *Nurds* never strays far from the exquisite and vigorous urbane folk constructions that made *The Roches* shine so brilliantly. And the sisters' complex three-part harmonies are a gorgeous, ever-moving (cascading, then jutting in front of a melody, then cushioning) aural landscape.

The Roches' expertise at juggling humor, pathos, anger, and other possible responses to the human condition is exemplified in "The Death of Suzzy Roche," which concerns a most ordinary subject—Suzzy doing the wash. Now Suzzy may seem like a perfectly decent sort of woman, but some woman who works in the laundromat honestly believes that Suzzy is a self-important, inconsiderate, all-around terrible person, overloading washing machines and all. High melodrama ensues when this other woman decides she's had just about enough; she throws Suzzy's clothes all over the place and then, naturally, she kills Suzzy. Or is this her fantasy? Is it, by any chance, Suzzy's fantasy!?! This is a very *silly* song, to be sure; as in many of the weird sisters' songs, its eccentricity is in part a deliberate humorous set-up: the inherent humor in the situation; the descriptive lyrics—*She's got stinky crusty socks/She's got underwear that shocks* the insane possibility that murder might hinge (justifiably?) on dingy panties. Further, and perhaps more important, warping results from the non-stop eye-crossing (ear-crossing?) that is entailed in trying to simultaneously register all of the mundane reductions and romantic expansions.

Daring to hunt for inversions in intelligently chosen appropriated material, the Roches deliver an hilarious *a cappella* reading of Cole Porter's sophisticated rhythms. The obvious and knowing juxtaposition—*It's so good for me it's bad for me*—is turned into a perverse and gleeful contradiction. And the beautiful traditional Irish song, "Factory Girl," is a natural. Any time great passion is thwarted by *the dumb sound of the factory bell,* don't be surprised to find a Roche or three calling for both tears and laughter. *—Jim Feldman*

DON McLEAN
Chain Lightning,
(Millennium/RCA)
JAMES TAYLOR
Dad Loves His Work
(Columbia)
JESSE WINCHESTER
Talk Memphis
(Bearsville)

The new albums by these three singer/songwriters, all in the full bloom of their mid-30s maturity, cover a surprisingly wide range of attitudes and musical styles. All three are successful and widely recognized master craftsmen, although no one is going to pretend that even collectively these guys muster the urgency and jolt of an Elvis Costello. Quite the contrary, what we have here are today's most polished, mainstream pop versions of the solitary man, armed only with his guitar and a song.

Don McLean accepts this mantle the most willingly. *Chain Lightning* is an unabashed attempt to recreate and even extend the early 60s Nashville-style pop production sound that swathed everybody from Elvis Presley to Nat "King" Cole in a soothing, slightly bitter-sweet blanket of strings, pedal steel guitar, and background vocals (for authenticity's sake, even the Jordanaires' dulcet voices are used all over this LP). It's a genre that suits McLean's pure tenor perfectly, and his covers of Roy Orbison's "Crying" —already a big top-40 hit this year—and the Skyliners' "Since I Don't Have You" are fully realized little gems of this oft-forgotten production style. On his own material, like the title cut and "Genesis (In The Beginning)," McLean's plain-speaking, neofolkie roots are more apparent, but during a couple of actual rockers, the singer projects a pleasantly easygoing familiarity with rockabilly, most especially with his cover of Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps' "Lotta Lovin'."

James Taylor continues to record with the cream off the top of the L.A. studio scene and Peter Asher at the production helm. JT's been a big-time soft-rock star long enough now that many of his lyrics reflect the problems of life in a permanent passing zone, and there's a question here of just how interesting that lane is to me, John Q. Listener. On the one hand, songs like "Hour That The Morning Comes," "Hard Times," and "Believe It Or Not" sound more personal—especially as regards marital problems—than anything he's committed to wax in years. On the other hand, soul-baring as sole inspiration doesn't always make for a fabulously interesting album, and even for a James Taylor LP, this one's got some serious lulls. What the singer *does* put across convincingly here is a sense of anomaly, loneliness and upheaval, with a momentary ray of sunshine portrayed in the nicely Carib-flavored

"Summer's Here." As usual, the Rick Marotta-Leland Sklar drums/bass combo lays down wonderfully tight and tangy funk in the grooves whenever the songs themselves sound a little too lugubrious. The album's by no means a musical disaster, just a little sad at its emotional core.

Jesse Winchester's songs have been frequently covered (Joan Baez, the Everly Bros., Jimmy Buffet), but since he quit America in '67 to avoid the draft and become a Canadian citizen, his own albums have been sporadic. The truth is that Winchester is a natural-born Southerner (raised in Shreveport, La. and Memphis), and *Talk Memphis* teams him with Willie Mitchell, the brilliant Memphis-based trumpeter-arranger-producer. The result is a slightly quirky, quietly melodic, R&B-flavored set that sounds a bit like Al Green meets Elvis Presley at a little country church (they dive into Memphis and have a drink with Booker T. and the MG's). Mitchell is at his best supplying tracks like the one on "Let Go," which could be an outtake from Al Green's *Let's Stay Together* LP, the funk simmering on the back burner. Winchester's at his best on songs like "Sure Enough," where he sings *it's too late to save my soul, so come on help me spend it . . . Talk Memphis* maybe mellow in the extreme, but it's also genuine Memphis R&B-tinged pop, and Winchester's songs and vocal delivery reveal a comfortably familiar, earthy wisdom. He may not have Don McLean's perfectly-tuned pipes, but if he keeps it up, Jesse Winchester just might end up having the same problems plaguing James Taylor, vis-a-vis success.—*Crispin Cioe*

THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS
Butt Rockin'
(Chrysalis)

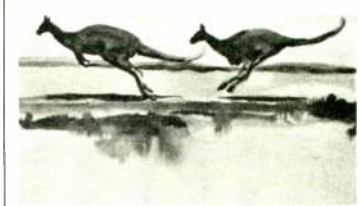
You'd have to have a heart of stone and feet of clay not to dig the Fabulous Thunderbirds. The T-Birds are a straight-forward, *guilt-free* white (rhythm &) blues band from Texas. Their press kit is a scant one page long. There's no

mention of which T-Bird got a Master's degree with an annotated discography of Lonesome Sundown, nary an anecdote about guitarist Jimmie Vaughn getting high with Jimi Hendrix, or lead singer/harp player Kim Wilson being an Ikette in drag for a week to make sure his dues were paid in full. None of that good copy floating around these guys, and none needed.

This is not, be assured, a high stakes operation; tilling the quasi-national up-from-the-frat-party turf, it shares the furrows with such equally unknown bands as the All Stars and the Nighthawks. The T-Birds have taken their slice of this modest scooter pie from the largely unheralded Louisiana/Texas side (as distinguished from Memphis/Chicago) and have been as judicious with the hot sauce as prodigal with the hard work. As a result, *Butt Rockin'*, their third disc in three years, is focused, direct and tasty.

Their Louisiana tunes are on the Crowley/Ville Platte axis. "I Believe I'm In Love," a wonderful Wilson tune that opens Side One (and which I think is a hit), tips its grand chapeau to Rockin' Sydney and his Dukes. The next track, "One's Too Many," was co-written by Wilson and Nick Lowe, noted fan of Americana. (The song describes the sort of difficult woman Lowe usually writes about.) Wilson's rich baritone, suffused with echo, and his skillful, appropriate harp playing, are restrained and winning. "Tip On In," unreconstructed and without flash—"dedicated with great respect to the memory of Slim Harpo"—and "I Hear You Knockin'," another Excello gem, are difficult songs to cover. It's not enough just to unearth the tune, it's too easy to dress it up and misrepresent it. You have to *play* it, not reproduce it, and the T-Birds know the difference.

The Texas style originals, "I'm Sorry" and "Give Me All Your Lovin' " and the New Orleans style cover, "Mathilda," give guitarist Vaughn a chance to discreetly display his T-Bone Walker and Guitar Slim homework. And a 1:57 harp romp through "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White"—can you mambo?—seals the deal. *Butt Rockin'* is fine work from a band with its heart in the right place and its chops from all the right places. Besides, any record that begins, *I don't know what's wrong with me/I feel foolish as a fool can be*, is all right with me.—*Jeff Nesin*



LEO KOTTKE
Guitar Music
(Chrysalis)
JOHN FAHEY
Live In Tasmania
(Takoma)

If you find it hard to believe that one man and a guitar can make viable music in the Cybernetic Age these two records provide living proof. Leo Kottke's decision to abandon the string sections and backing musicians he employed while trying to expand his audience is a welcome one—the sound he gets from his guitars is capable of orchestral breadth (especially in open C tuning) and a compellingly intimate quality. The return to solo guitar music seems to reflect a closer approach to his own voice as a composer as well—the off-center melodies and harmonic modulations that always hinted at his possible contributions to the genre flow more logically now, and he's found more natural ways of departing and returning to the alternating bass that defines the 'folk' style. The outside compositions—Ry Cooder's "Available Space," Sanot and Johnny's "Sleepwalk"—are beautifully done, but I prefer Kottke's own idiosyncratic visions.

John Fahey's vision has never been anything less. *Live in Tasmania* was recorded at an Australian concert, and shows the originator of "American primitive guitar" in fine form. The free sense of meter, biting tone and oddball humor are still there, but they interfere less with the music than on some of his more esoteric records. He sure sounds relaxed in his brief "Dissertation on Obscurity" rap. If you ever wondered where Leo Kottke was coming from, this is your chance to find out.—*Chris Doering*

CHAMPAIGN
How 'Bout Us
(Columbia)

From an Illinois town of same name, Champaign has produced a debut album that, in the words of Michael Day, keyboardist & point man for the seven person group, "might be labelled a classic R&B record." Classic it is, not merely reflecting much of the funk'n'roll influences that Maurice White injected into the 70s, but expressing a freshness and a directness that we have come to expect from Midwestern funk. *How 'Bout Us* ducks the facile and coldly imitative potential that envelops many L.A. groups and makes us remember how powerful the forms were before they had been copied to death.

This here's-the-music, hold-the-glamor approach (the album features no glossy color photos of richly costumed stars) may have its source in the many years the rhythm section woodshedded as the house band for their own studio in Champaign. The interplay of the basic tracks has an airy lack of self-consciousness, particularly the

bright Verdine White pop of Michael Reed's bass work. The vocals, led by Paulie Carman and Rena Jones (Les McCann) are full, with five strong singers laying down a celebratory wall of brilliant sound.

Definitely dance music, (the consistency of the album makes it a great party record) *How 'Bout Us* doesn't have the firecracker snap of aggressive funk; its songs inspire a smooth and sensual body movement. While most of side one and the first part of side two break little new ground, they offer a solid and commercially viable restatement of the genre. The record does open up a little in its last three numbers. In particular, "Lighten Up" juxtaposes a very punchy, sparse rhythm track with a vocal hopscotch that uses the spaces to great effect, incorporating the album's only lyrical compulsions that aren't romantically resolved: *Travellin' through a maze at twice the speed of light . . . my head is sure pumpin' fast but with the price of fuel, you know I can't be cool.* The album's closer evokes another Mid-westerner, Michael McDonald. This more adventurous musical form is probably what Champaign would like to move toward. Michael Day comments: "We aren't afraid to buck conventions. When Stevie did *Talking Book*, he broke a barrier. I respected people who will take a chance and not be afraid to challenge their audience."

You've got to look between the lines for much of this on *How 'Bout Us*, but it is the most we can expect from a debut album: solid, performable in concert, reliably familiar enough to move those units for Columbia. Champaign's followup will probably sound more like side two and may offer a clue to where the funk will evolve once audiences (and musicians) are secure enough to leave *That's the Way of the World* to a different decade.
—Jim Feldman and Jonathan Baird

GANG OF FOUR
Gang of Four
(Warner Bros. EP)
TOM ROBINSON
Sector 27
(I.R.S.)

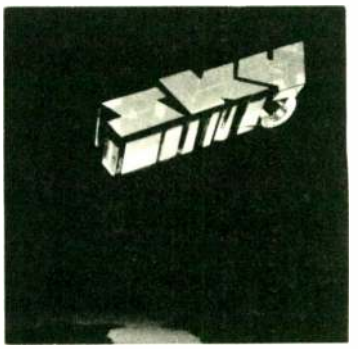
The last twitches of the dying Left or the first angular thrusts of the New Right? It's your Move. The Gang of Four's solemn Marxist orthodoxy is consistently contradicted by the music's irresistible pulse and vacuum-like Black Holes. Does anyone really ponder the iniquities of the competitive *laissez-faire* marketplace while they're getting down to "It's Her Factory?" The tension in this British group's music arises not only from the band's very imprisonment in a system they openly criticize. How can they preach discipline and restraint while their music openly encourages the opposite?

The new, 4-song EP released by Warners shows the Gang of Four at peak form. The heavily syncopated, echoed beat underlying the chanting of John King and the bit-off snippets of Andy Gill's gnarled guitar characterize the stark three-dimensional outline of "Armalite Rifle" and "He'd Send in the Army." But, even as the band carves out a unique niche with its hard-edged danceable sound, they choose to take refuge behind an uncomfortably doctrinaire Marxist dialectic. And, while the music does provide an ironic counterpoint, the lyrics themselves convey impersonal dogmas or repeated wisdoms rather than useful, provocative observations.

Perhaps the greatest blow to the liberal cause is the disaffection of do-gooder Tom Robinson, whose TRB (Tom Robinson Band) revived the lost art of the protest song with anthems such as "Right On Sister" and the uplifting "Glad To Be Gay." Tom observed what the Gang of Four, Public Image, Ltd., Joy Division and the Cure were up to in the way of political ambiguity, and disbanded TRB to form Sector 27, a more experimental outfit that confronts society's bitter paradoxes head on, with a Freudian, rather than New Deal, bent. The results are now on a Steve (Peter Gabriel, XTC) Lillywhite-produced LP that contains some of Robinson's most intense, yet melodic work.

"Invitation," "Not Ready" and "Can't Keep Away" deal with Robinson's homosexuality in blunt, often painfully honest and personal terms. The musical backing, with androgynous guitarist Stevie B. providing some uncanny Keith (PiL) Levene licks and the rhythm section unabashedly copping the Gang of Four's jagged meter, tries hard to be hip. But Sector 27 is at its best when the band sticks to Tom Robinson's strength—neither experimentation nor improvisation, but songwriting—his proven ability to come up with memorable verses and catchy choruses. Pop songs like "2-4-6-8 Motorway" are what made the TRB so special in the first place.

The depressing thing about Sector 27, though, is Tom Robinson's new found pessimism; his abdication of the liberal's belief in man's goodness and perfectability. *"I never expected pie-in-the-sky, but anything is better than a kick in the eye,"* sings Robinson. From a die-hard one-time activist like him, *that's* sad.—*Roy Trakin*



SKY
Sky 3
(Arista)
THE DREGS
Unsung Heroes
(Arista)

These 2 bands attempt to bring classical and rock music together in a more immediate way than the facile grafting of symphonic strings onto a rock rhythm section. To understand why the results are so different, let's remind ourselves of the differences between the two traditions.

Western classical music is principally the music of the note—the composer's written record of his intention, which may be interpreted, but never departed from, by the performer.

Folk and popular music, on the other hand, is the music of sound, of learning and playing by ear. And since the ear can hear from within as well as without, the folk tradition has always been one of improvisation.

So . . . Sky is five English players, one of whom, John Williams, is a candidate for Greatest Living Classical Guitarist. The other four are session musicians when they're not working together. Williams contributed an arrangement of Handel's "Sarabande" to the album, and the original material follows similar lines, drawing on the baroque and romantic styles and following a classical pattern of orchestration; repetition of themes with different instrumentation, development from solos or duets to the full band, etc. There are some lovely melodies and thoughtful arrangements, especially the jazzy "Connecting Rooms," which gives Williams a chance to show that incredibly pure

tones can be pulled from a Les Paul as well as his Fleta classical. Yet the music doesn't really come together—Sky is modern chamber orchestra one minute, ersatz rock band the next. Only "Meheeco" manages to use classical precision to enhance and develop the swing of its odd-meter groove. The other pieces are often bloated into odd shapes by the entrance of trap set and electric bass, or drained of energy by the refinement of the performance.

The Dregs, schooled though they are, are anything but refined. Steve Morse's "Day 444" and "Attila the Hun" are intricate and structured enough to appear on *Sky 3*, but they exist primarily as vehicles for improvisation—he takes both out with fire-breathing guitar solos. *Unsung Heroes* is tighter and more structured than the Dregs' previous efforts, though it follows a now-familiar pattern—mostly boogie, a little blue-grass, a touch of funk, and the closing acoustic piece "Go For Baroque."

The members of Sky would probably deny it (their humorous liner notes certainly try to), but an aura of seriousness prevades *Sky 3*, a concert hall atmosphere that undercuts their moves towards rock. The Dregs, of course, would never be caught taking themselves too seriously. They are playing in both senses of the word. Yet *Unsung Heroes*, excellent though it is, is a refinement of a formula, while *Sky 3* hints at possibilities just beginning to be explored.—*Chris Doering*

ROCKPILE
Seconds of Pleasure
(Columbia)

This is the most anticipated debut album by a working group since the Band removed themselves from Bob Dylan's shadow to record *Music From Big Pink*. In fact, Rockpile has taken the woodshedding concept one step further to become the only rock band to establish themselves as a headlining concert attraction without having recorded as a group.

Seconds of Pleasure takes its forcefully modest place beside the previous solo outings of Rockpile's co-leaders, Dave Edmunds and Nick Lowe, but the record is a true debut in that the band's sound is defined here as a unit for the first time and is essential to the record's overall impact. It's a sound pared down to basics, but not in the fashionable sense of a group of demi-musical *artistes* covering their technical deficiencies with new wave "art." Rockpile completely eschews this kind of attitudinizing in favor of a no nonsense approach to rock 'n' roll as an end in itself.

Rockpile's humility offers far more than the audience identification that places them in the same school as Springsteen and the more proletarian of the Southern rockers—it's the key to understanding the group's internal coherence. Edmunds, Lowe and Terry Williams were virtuoso musicians leading some of England's finest bands a decade ago and back then the combined British fame of Brinsley Schwarz (Lowe), Man (Williams) and Love Sculpture (Edmunds) would have instantly marked Rockpile as a "supergroup," and would have certainly also spelt their demise. But these players have willingly set aside demands for top billing and solo space in exchange for a format that ensures their musical growth. In this sense they are a true *group* in the tradition of bands like the Beatles and the Who.

Rockpile's reputation has grown to the point where too much pressure of expectation has been placed on *Seconds of Pleasure*. The witty understatement of the title asserts the group's philosophy and challenges those who, upon listening to the record and not hearing something revolutionary, declare the record an uninteresting rock revival hype. It has nothing to do with a revival of any kind. It is contemporary rock 'n' roll, schooled on a quarter century of influences to be sure, but edited to its most compact and effective form. You can hear Williams straining to compress the long, hypnotic rhythmic structures he evolved with Man into the concise drum roll intro that blasts off the album's strongest cut, "Play That Fast Thing (One More Time)." Lowe's strong, melodic bass playing and brilliant song-writing would make him the leader of most other current groups, but here he fits perfectly into the tightly woven exchange established with Edmunds, whose precision guitar playing never wastes a note or lingers on a solo. Edmunds and Billy Bremner structure the group's two-guitar interchange with breathtaking logic and emotional sweep, especially on "Teacher Teacher," "Pet You and Hold You" and "Fool Too Long." It's this thoroughly professional give and take, the balance in which each part surrenders itself willingly to the overall effect, that makes Rockpile one of the great groups in rock history.—*John Swenson*

AL DiMEOLA, JOHN McLAUGHLIN AND PACO DeLUCIA
Friday Night in San Francisco
(Columbia)

Destined to be the "guitarist's guitarists" acoustic album of the year, *Friday Night In San Francisco*, a live take on last year's DiMeola/McLaughlin/DeLucia tour recorded at San Francisco's Warfield Theatre, could pose a few problems for those less inclined to luxuriate in the penultimate guitar riff. No doubt Al DiMeola, John McLaughlin and falmenco master Paco DeLucia easily represent about as much collective guitaristic horsepower, in terms of sheer technical mastery and charismatic stage presence, as can possibly be generated on one stage at one time. But herein the rub: sparkling, near-tanscendent moments emerged from delicate ensemble passages, particularly on McLaughlin and DeLucia's highly sympathetic interpretation of Egberto Gismonti's lilting "Frevo Rasgado," only to be overpowered by supercharged technical displays on less structured performances like the DiMeola/McLaughlin showdown which mars Chick Corea's "Short Tales of the Black Forest."

There is nothing inherently wrong with virtuoso guitar playing, especially when each musician embodies such a wealth of stylistic influences and variations as those represented here. When "cutting" (here used in the most primal sense of simply *topping* one another as opposed to an exhilarating and occasionally dangerous method of mutual enlightenment) starts to dominate the proceedings, the fragile melodic continuity of these guitar-based compositions can be quickly diffused. After listening to cascading torrents of 16th and, in some cases, 32nd note runs, no matter how well articulated, the listener may yearn for some elemental legato-style playing.

No single player here can be faulted for the "double-time" feeling that courses through this recording. DiMeola, using a steel string Ovation acoustic-electric, still features a lightning fast, heavily percussive attack but is actually rather laid back on many of the tracks considering the speed of the company he's keeping. McLaughlin can rev up his Ovation classical instrument when the music

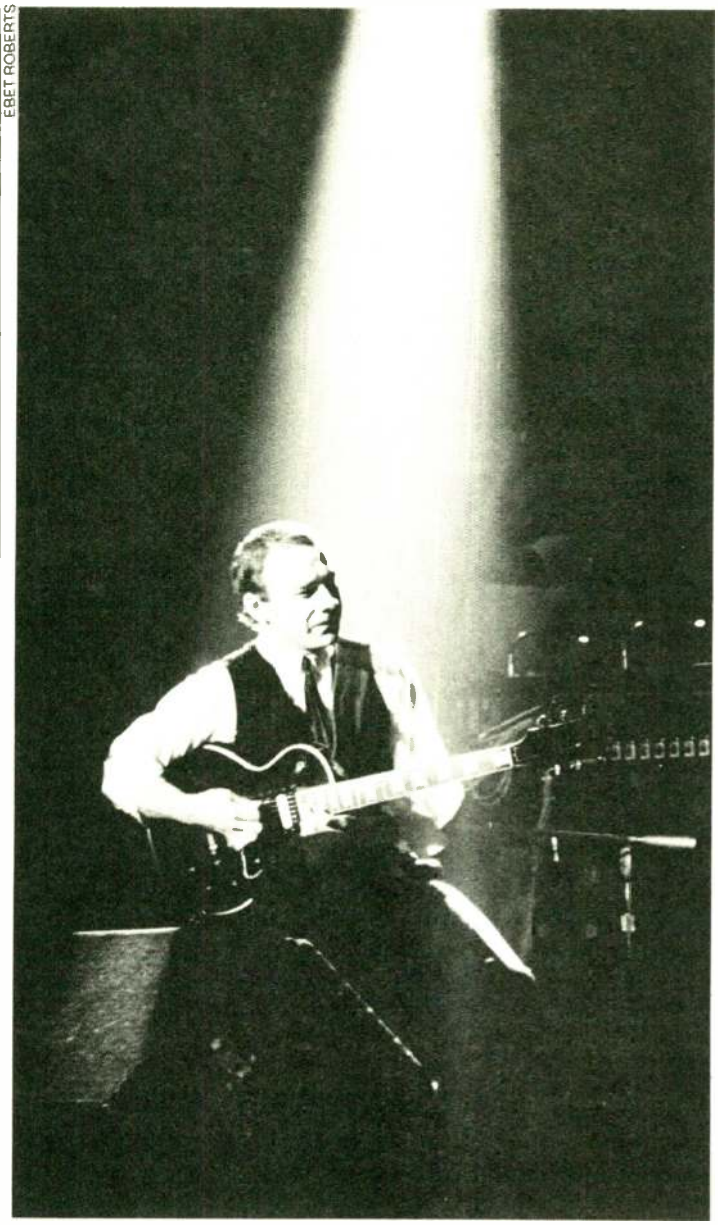
calls for it, or when Al starts to get on his nerves, but he is generally content to "flesh out" the compositions with his unique phrasing and chord work. DeLucia's traditional flamenco approach blends in exceedingly well on two of DiMeola's better pieces, "Mediterranean Sundance/Rio Ancho" and "Fantasia Suite," but even he, normally a model of concision and good taste, carries things a few choruses too far on occasion. A supergroup LP in the most understated sense of the word, *Friday Night In San Francisco* is not so much a battle of egos as a hyper-kinetic guitar "event" where the natural adrenalin rush created by three such gifted players in one setting is fueled by an adoring horde of fretboard *aficionados* to the point where the natural tempo of the concert begins to assume unreal proporitions.

On McLaughlin's "Guardian Angel," a studio recording which closes off side two with a more stately tone, the three guitars work exceptionally well together, creating a rich mosaic of interweaving chords and melodic figures played in unison and/or contrapuntally. These moments are what this tripartite collaboration should be about. The vertiginous instrumental displays are best left as grist for the aspiring guitarists to gnaw on till the next thing comes along, but the undeniable excitement created by what is essentially an acoustic guitar chamber group bodes well for the future. In fact, a live LP of Larry Coryell, McLaughlin and DeLucia (the "European" version of this trio) might provide some pointed comparisons.

—J.C. Costa

FRED FRITH
Speechless
(Ralph Records)
ROBERT FRIPP
Let The Power Fall
(Editions E.G.)

When is a guitarist not a guitarist? What distinguishes pop music from avantgarde or classical? Why is most cerebral music purely instrumental? Can you dance to ambient music? Is rock 'n' roll distinguished by its beat?



EBET ROBERTS

Good morning students and welcome to Professors Fred Frith and Robert Fripp's Theory of Pop Music 101. These two eccentric English gentlemen have more in common than the similarity of their surnames. Both are cult figures with fanatically devoted followers; both have put in time with seminal art-rock outfits (Henry Cow and King Crimson); both have partaken of the energy on the New York new wave club circuit to resuscitate their causes; both have spent the better part of a decade expanding the boundaries of the electric guitar. *Speechless* and *Let The Power Fall* exist at the farthest fringes of the pop spectrum, offering possibilities, blueprints, half-formed ideas and the notion of music as spontaneous sculptures of landscaped sounds. Unfortunately, as finished, articulate pieces, both LPs reflect their creators' various strengths and weaknesses as fully-fledged artists.

Fred Frith has long been an innovative voice on the left-field English progressive wing, at once too arcane for the commercial success experienced by contemporaries like Pink Floyd, Genesis and Yes. His stints with Henry Cow and Art Bears, though, have garnered him an intensely loyal audience, one committed to Frith with a hippie-like sense of undifferentiated awe.

Like his compatriot Fripp, Frith is at his most accessible with a powerful rhythm section to frame his drone-like excursions. At various times, Frith's treated guitar approximates an Indian raga, an Irish folk song, a Rio bossa nova, super-market muzak, African chants. *Speechless* even employs the "found material" approach Byrne and Eno utilize on *Bush of Ghosts* and Fripp has used on *Exposure* and the recent *League of Gentlemen*. But it is the live tracks, recorded at CBGB with bassist Bill Laswell and drummer Fred Maher (Massacre), on which Frith's ideas really take hold.

Let the Power Fall is a continuation of Fripp's fascination with the tape-loop method he calls Frippertronics, featuring a series of live performances culled from his one-man tour of a couple years ago. That said, these meandering conundrums of overlapping guitar brush-strokes do not seem to outlive their transient circumstances. Still, the sound is so present that Fripp's whining guitar hypnotically leaps across the room, bouncing from speaker to speaker. Pity he couldn't capture that angular buoyancy on the one-dimensional *League of Gentlemen*, his own dance LP.

As self-declared avant-grade artists, Fred Frith and Robert Fripp are theoretically tied to those contradictions which make their art so problematic. *Speechless* and *Let The Power Fall* pose the aesthetic questions that others will eventually answer in commercial terms.—*Roy Trakin*

GRATEFUL DEAD
Reckoning
(Arista)

Good news . . . you don't have to be a diehard Deadhead to enjoy the latest live LP issued from the Dead's headquarters in mellow Marin County (where *real* longhaired, dope smokin' hippies can still be found). *Reckoning*—16 songs on two records, taken from dates in N.Y.C. and San Francisco last year— is the first good album from the Grateful Dead in ten years.

It's no accident that this record includes acoustic performances (although Phil Lesh does play electric bass), a format in keeping with the music and feel of their best albums, *Workingman's Dead* (1970) and *American Beauty* (1971): albums that found the band remaking folk music to fit their psychedelic worldview.

This relaxed set shows off the band's instrumental abilities, rarely at the expense of the song itself (an exception is "Bird Song," which includes a lengthy instrumental that sounds like the Dead have been listening to old Dave Brubeck albums). Garcia's singing is strong (for him) and the pairing of his raspy oldman/wiseman voice with acoustic fingerpicking is natural enough. Particularly satisfying tracks are "It Must Have Been the Roses," a yearning love song with a tender reading by Garcia over lose interplay between Weir, Garcia and Brent Mydland on acoustic guitars and grand piano; and "China Doll," featuring Garcia's dramatic vocal set against the Victorian moodiness of Mydland's harpsichord. Bob Weir's all-American vocals have never been impressive and his unmemorable, passionless versions of "The Race Is On" and "On the Road Again" are the low points on an otherwise solid record.

As electric rock 'n' roll band, the Grateful Dead have been stuck in a late 60s time warp—a creative rut—playing the same cosmic anthems and rambling jams (" . . . noodling around aimlessly for 15 minutes" is how Garcia recently put it) year after year. But by opting for acoustic folk and country music, the Dead break that mold (at least on this album), exchanging dated ensemble work for a timeless American sound that is, still, distinctively their own.

—Michael Goldberg.

DEVO
Live
(Warner Bros.)

Hey, hey, they're the new Monkees, homogenized New Wave humanoids programmed for pop success. Formerly a clever entertaining combo perverting science and rock 'n' roll for their own warped satiric purpose, Devo have, in fact, devolved into a smug hit machine churning out Top 40 trinkets. This six-track 12" EP, recorded live in San Francisco, shows there is still a mean beat amidst the bull. But where we once laughed with them, are we now laughing at them?

DEFUNKT
Defunkt
(Hannibal)

These days, serious jazz cats who decide to play dance music are—take themselves to be—as rebellious and avant-garde as the ones who decided *not to* in the '40s. Great; reversals and cycles are always provocative. But how Defunkt got slapped with the "punk jazz" label is beyond me. Ain't no punk in Defunkt, though songs like "Thermonuclear Sweat" and "Strangling Me With Your Love"—the latter of which contains the lines, *You look at me as if you had no eyes/but when you touch me I have no skin*—strike decidedly New Wavey postures. And "jazz" is hardly what I'd call it: we have here eight tracks of standard funk, peppered (thankfully, but not sufficiently) with short solos.

So the question is: how's de funk? Mediocre unfortunately, something like a sped-up fusion of mid-'70s Chicago with the Ohio Players. Mundane (sooo hippp!) lyrics Joe Bowie's ever-present and one-dimensional singing, tired P-Funk synth/guitar vamps, Chic bass lines, formula handclaps and chants of "Make Them Dance" and "Party Hearty" undermine Defunkt's stab at an open marriage of jazz, funk and punk. All'n all, a major disappointment.

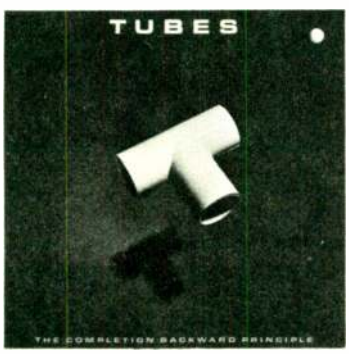
RY COODER
Borderline
(Warner Bros.)

Ry Cooder's latest album is the clearest realization yet of his sound, and seems the most accessible to a mass audience. The tempos are a bit faster than '79s *Bop 'Til You Drop* and Ry's singing is more assertive and confident. Perhaps most important is the shift in lyrical concerns away from misogyny, which runs like red thread from "Alimony" on his first album right up to *Bop's* "The Very Thing That Makes You Rich." On "634-5789" and "Speedo," Cooder casts himself as that classic r&b ladies' man, while John Hiatt's "The Way We Make A Broken Heart" finds him aiding and abetting one of those lowdown two-timing women as she takes advantage of some hapless sucker.

The band is as tight as your old blue jeans. Jim Keltner's drums weave a contrapuntal rhythmic spell with the bass and piano, Cooder's guitar dodges through the cracks, and

the gospel voices of Bobby King and Willie Greene Jr. punctuate the groove. In this music, there is no old or new. Reggae and fatback r&b get down together and party with blues licks as old as the hills. An ancient boogie like "Johnny Porter" makes a natural companion to Joe South's 60's classic "Down in the Boondocks." And when Ry ends his solo on "Crazy 'Bout An Automobile" with a lick Son House might have played, it's right at home.

This is the same stuff Cooder's been doing all along, but this time the emotional impact of the music is more direct—from the happy feeling of the r&b cuts to the gathering doom of "Johnny Porter" to the wistful longing of "Down in the Boondocks." Most music for mass consumption stuffs every available space with sound, but Cooder leaves breathing space around each instrument of the ensemble. He respects openness, individuality, silence. Even the backup vocals are individual voices, not a homogenized blend. The music here reflects Cooder's folk roots, not in the sound, but in the way the sound is made—most of all in the way it recognizes silence as an equal, as the condition necessary for listening to the sounds of your own heart.—*Chris Doering*



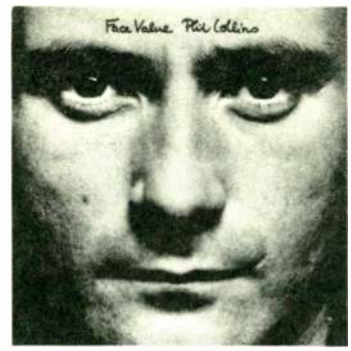
TUBES
The Completion Backward Principle
(Capitol)

Call me old-fashioned, but I've never been able to tolerate recorded sarcasm for more than a minute—it all ends up sounding cute. Yes, they really can play—that's essential to the joke. There are yards of funny ink all over this album cover; they're parodying the American economy on its upscale, corporate side—a Devo for aging hippies. I'm sure they're still fun onstage, but listening to them self-righteously throw away their virtuosity on songs like "Suchi Girl" and "Power Tools" gets boring fast.


DEBORAH FEINGOLD

PHIL COLLINS
Face Value
(Atlantic)

The Genesis drummer finally gets his solo two-cents in, but the end result is worth much more. Forget the big name guest stars—Eric Clapton, Stephen Bishop, the EW&F horns. Concentrate instead on the seamless fusion of electro-poptones, jazzy inflections, cool R&B understatement, and sparing flashes of art-rock grandeur, all topped off by Collins' plaintive wail. He does a funky custom job on Genesis' own "Behind the Lines" and turns the Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows" into 21st Century psychedelia. Gabriel LPs notwithstanding, this is the best Genesis-related album since *A Trick of the Tail.*



STEELY DAN
Gaucho
(MCA)

Gaucho's message is lounge music, pure and complex. Do not be deceived by what sounds, at first, like seven songs for mildly anemic, 'luded out lounge lizards. *Gaucho* may seem slower than *Aja*, more relaxed that *Royal Scam*, but after three days it's *Royal Scam* and *Aja* which come off sounding thin. *Gaucho's* no-nonsense horn arrangements and straight-ahead drum tracks are there for a reason: they provide a perfect grid for the most intricate, imaginative music that Walter Becker, Donald Fagan and Gary Katz have produced.

"Babylon Sisters" opens the set. We're in Los Angeles even before Donald Fagen can say, *Drive west on Sunset/To the sea/Turn that jungle music down* . . . By the time Steve Kahn's reggae rhythm guitar arrives, the air is thick and yellow. The sensation of travel, of sitting in The Limousine as it makes its way down The Boulevard, is unmistakable:

"Hey Nineteen" is a song composed for back-up singers. The *We can't dance together/No we can't talk at all* chorus impersonates Michael McDonald (who makes a later cameo on *Time Out of Mind)* while Donald Fagen alternately attacks and massages his synthesizer. Before the fade-out, he throws us a treat: a Stevie Wonderesque solo which unfortunately lasts only 32 seconds. "Glamour Profession" is Ellingtonia draped all over the City of Tinsel. We're back in The Limo, still traveling in style, but through heavier, more rewarding traffic. Again, the best music starts after the vocals are over: give some extra volume to Steve Khan's closing guitar work.

Tom Scott's sassy tenor opens "Gaucho." The tenor resurfaces at regular intervals, sometimes as an intro to Donald Fagen's vocals, sometimes as a direct accompaniment. Why is "Gaucho" the title cut? Because "Gaucho" is uncharted territory, an unmitigated breakthrough into the heights of the Custerdome: *One more expensive kissoff/Who do you think I am/Lord I know you're a special friend/But you don't seem to understand* . . .

"Time Out Of Mind" is party music; the lounge lizards come to their senses at 3 a.m. and dance to metaphysical bop. "My Rival" gives further evidence that Donald Fagen has arrived as the state-of-the-art popular vocalist. He gets more out of his voice in the way of perverting nuances and wiseass sneers than any singer since the lead vocalist on *Blonde and Blonde.* Where do they get these lines?

"Third World Man" adds to

the final song tradition which began with "Katy Lied" (the song) and continued so elegantly through "Royal Scam" (the song) and "Josie." This is a lullaby about a child who turns his front lawn into the front lines of a war zone. The final chorus has to rank among the more beautiful homages ever paid to The Beatles. So buy *Gaucho*. Spend money. Legal problems are never truly over and quality like this requires an inordinate amount of seasoning—it may be 1984 before the next Steely Dan album is in the stores. Let's hope for a double. Let's pray for a double. Until then, *Gaucho* is rich enough to keep us patient.—*Joshua Baer*

SQUEEZE
East Side Story
(A&M)
SPLIT ENZ
Waiata
(A&M)

The idea of neoclassical pop generally makes me nervous. *Of course* cultural and historical continuity demands that we all stand on the shoulders of giants from time to time. The hard part is sorting through the myopic small fry who, straining on tiptoes, can't manage to see farther than the illustrious predecessors supporting them—Tom Petty, after a hot start, seems to be a rather ordinary sort—to get to the worthy inheritors.

Worthy inheritors in the neoclassical school must have the full complement of pop chops: attractive, recognizable leads; lovely harmonies; taut, balanced playing; haunting hooks, etc., etc. They must also believe in radio (transistors, dashboards, tuners, et al.) as the one and true medium for pop music. I met both Squeeze and Split Enz on the radio and I'm certainly glad of it, though in differing degrees. Squeeze may ultimately be too subtle for the string-of-smashes Hall of Fame and Split Enz may ultimately prove to be midgets, but they both belong on the radio.

To take the simplest first, Split Enz, who at one time wanted to be the Wizard of the South Pacific, threw away their fright wigs and had a wonderful AM hit last year. "I Got You" had the kind of chorus that was indelibly imprinted after two hearings. Their new LP, *Waiata*, contains several tunes that could imprint whether you want them to or not (an old pop trick). The first cuts on each side—these guys are aggressive—are the likely candidates. "History Never Repeats," a nasal lamentation with a high pressure hook, is probably a hit in spite of the dreadful couplet *There was a girl I used to know/She dealt my love a savage blow.* "Hard Act to Follow," reminiscent of the Cars' first album (they're not suffy about whose shoulders they stand on), just might follow. "I Don't Wanna Dance" with even more Cars-ish percolation and angular vocals, and "Walking Through the Ruins" which sounds like Traffic on a very busy day, are the tracks I most favor. There are some I don't favor at all, but Split Enz belong on the radio and what is more, they *will* be on the radio.

Squeeze's new LP, *East Side Story*, belongs not only on the radio but on headphones as well (Walkman album of the month). Its finely crafted and accessible pop is reminiscent of *Revolver*-era Beatles music, but the *narrative* songs—the best since the Kinks left Reprise—raise them head and shoulders above the 60s revival. The band's songwriting/guitar/vocals team of Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook seem utterly incapable of knocking off airy ditties about nothing at all. In fact, all 14 songs (that's right, 14—influenced, no doubt, by producer Elvis "I Can't Stop" Costello) develop elaborate scenarios filled with sophisticated touches and vivid, novelistic details. In "Labelled With Love," Tilbrook sings about an aging alcoholic dying amongst her memories back home in England, the widow of a drunken cowboy she followed to Texas after the war. (This sentence bears the same relation to the actual song that Cliff's Notes does to *Pride And Prejudice.)* "Someone Else's Bell" x-rays a relationship rotted hollow by infidelity; "Piccadilly" follows a nervous date through several interesting changes of scene; and "Woman's World" carefully chronicles the disintegration of a neglected housewife in under four minutes. *East Side Story* makes liberal use of Beatles' moves, through it stretches far beyond neoclassical orthodoxy, and the hand of Mr. Costello is also in evidence, though the songs here are neither elliptical nor obviously personal. Most of all the songs of Difford and Tilbrook call to mind the particularly English novels of someone like Beryl Bainbridge: sharply etched, in good supply, and stocked with unique sensibility and characterization. *And* they've got a good beat and you can dance to them.—*Jeff Nesin*

PAT BENETAR
Precious Time
(Chrysalis)

This girl really knows how to pummel the cliches—she's everything *Variety* sums up in the word they often use for female singers: "thrush." By putting her spitfire vocalizations over growling heavy-metal band sounds, she's making modern, chic soap opera historionics (*your doctor's on vacation/so you took the medication/And wound up in the lost and found*) safe for a whole new generation. She covers "Helter Skelter" and the Raiders' "Just Like Me" in the same frantically gruff style as her own material (e.g., the bathetic "Evil Genius") so her fans probably think she's got guts. It feels more like suburban chutzpah to me.

PRINCE
Dirty Mind
(Warners)

Prince Nelson has the look and the hype of a future superstar. From coast to coast he is compared to everyone from Jimi Hendrix to Smokey Robinson to Sly Stone, a nice parlay for a 21 year old fresh from the wilds of Minnesota. And the kid just might deserve it, at least as a musician. He plays a ton of instruments, including everything on this album, writes all his material and rivals Michael Jackson as black pop's reigning post-teen talent. All eight cuts on *Dirty Mind* suggest a musical intelligence and reach (falsetto soul, new wave rock, sophisti-funk) that says the Prince hype is justified. Not to forget that he is also one ass kicking live performer, as exciting and weird as he wants to be.

But folks, something has to be dealt with here, something that the rock press has glossed over and American radio is mulling right now. The boy has a *really* dirty mind. "Uptown," the single, is cute (*she just said 'are you gay'/ kind-a took me by*

surprise), but "Head"—whose subject is I think obvious—and "Sister, Sister," an ode to incest, are overt examples of a quite disgusting immaturity. Sex is no taboo subject in pop music; Mr. Nelson doesn't seem to understand that wit, understatement and style get one laid much more often than vulgarity. Bessie Smith, Louis Jordan, and a whole slew of blues artists got (and now get) mighty low at times; yet where they're sexy and sensual, Prince is naively adolescent. Makes all the difference, don't it?

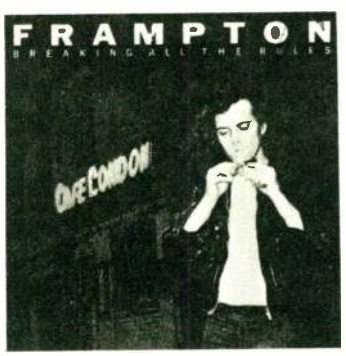
FOREIGNER
4
(Atlantic)

Aha . . . they've reached the level of sure-fire sales that lets them put out a totally blah album cover;

the kids are gonna give them back their (chart) bullets come hell or high wattage. Within their formula, this band is masterful—I like my refried free as well as the next guy. Give me a hash pipe and a smokin' Trans Am with big speakers and I could listen to both sides in a row. This stuff is supposed to make you aggressively horny, right? Here's a verse that kept them up all night, I'm sure: *(Ooh yeah) I'm looking for some action/I gotta find my main attraction now/'Cause I need some satisfaction* . . . So watch them hiss and grunt all the way to the bank. Next year'll bring *Foreigner 5*, I guess . . .

PETER FRAMPTON
Breaking All the Rules
(A&M)

After becoming one of rock's biggest jokes, it was forgotten that only a few years before Frampton was regarded as one of the finest hard rock guitarists around during his tenure with Humble Pie, particularly on the classic LPs *Rock On* and *Rockin' the Fillmore*. His light toned yet strong, jazz-tinged style made



him a well respected guitarist who was sought out as a session player by the likes of the Who's John Entwistle, who used Frampton to great effect on his *Whistle Rhymes* album.

Those who remember Frampton in happier moments will be thrilled when they play "Dig What I Say" and hear Frampton's big-voiced hard rock sound come blasting out of their speakers, his guitar lines ringing with more fuzz tone than he's ever recorded with previously. This is the record Frampton-the-guitar-hero has had in the wings while Frampton-the-teen-idol wimped out the ballads. The beautifully melodic "Rise Up" recalls the heavy but supple direction Frampton first tried with his brilliant debut solo LP *Winds of Change*, and on such Humble Pie classics as "Shine On" and "The Light."

THE CRAMPS
Psychedelic Jungle
(I.R.S.)

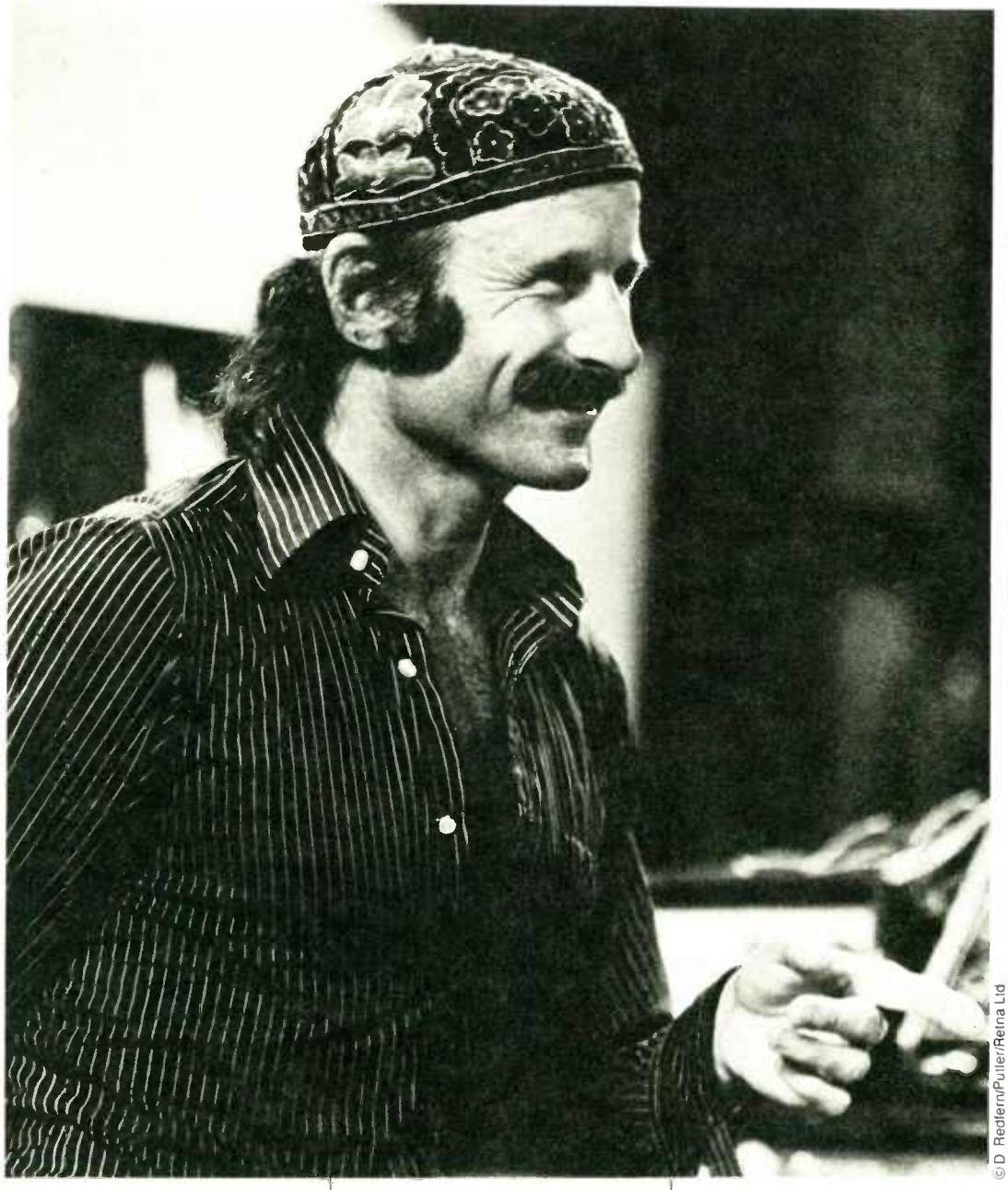
From the dark side of rockabilly comes this nasty foursome, stirring up more of their spicy voodoo stew on this second album. They have always taken more than a few cues from 60s garage band bash (here they cover "Green Fuz" and "Primitive," culled from the notorious *Pebbles* compilation series), but they also come up with some real trash classics of their own like "Don't Eat Stuff Off the Sidewalk" and "Can't Find My Mind." The Cramps probably recorded "Surfin' Bird" in another life.

GRACE JONES
Nightclubbing
(Island)

The androgynous disco ice goddess consolidates her growing art appeal with a nine-song selection (including Iggy's "Nightclubbing," Flash and the Pan's "Walking in the Rain," and a psycho-reggae number called "Demolition Man" written by Sting of the Police) that simply recaps her last LP *Warm Leatherette*. "Pull Up to the Bumper" is an ace tune, indicative of her horrorshow fusion of roots rhythms and futuristic cool.

BRAVE COMBO
Music for Squares
(Four Dots)

These nervy Texas pranksters play polkas, rhumbas, and tangos—complete with snorting saxophones and an asthmatic accordian—the way George Thorogood sinks his teeth into Chuck Berry. And I hear they do a mean version of "Purple Haze" live. The last word in ambient music. (Write to the Brave Combo c/o P.O. Box 233, Denton, Texas 76201.)



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WEATHER REPORT
Night Passage
(Arc-Columbia)

The plant life with whom I share my modest apartment were less than thrilled when I arrived home with this latest Weather Report release. They've never forgiven me for exposing them to *Mr. Gone* despite the fact that I caught some foliage swaying in rhythm while enjoying the live thunder on *8:30*. As I cracked the seal on *Night Passage*, the protests began: The flame plants and others withdrew their colors as the rest started to chant "WE WANT THE ART ENSEMBLE OF IDAHO!"

Well, we listened to this record for days and in that time WR had once again conquered the fickle affections of my critical greenery. They responded enthusiastically to Zawinul's frenzied

composition "Fast City" and nodded with silent approval after Shorter's blistering tenor solo on the cut. Wayne is a favorite in our home and my friends can't seem to get enough of him in WR. Their blinding devotion to Shorter almost broke the celebratory spirit when 52nd St. Chickie, the spider plant, leaned over my shoulder to check out the liner credits: "Dig this," he growled, "Wayne's not involved in the production again! Our man has gone from Producer, to Co-Producer, to Assistant Producer to No Mention!!" Tensions mounted as insults were hurled at everyone from Zawinul and Pastorious to CBS Pres Bruce Lundvall. Recognizing the loss of perspective on the part of her compatriots, the prayer plant soberly interjected: "However, don't you find Mr Zawinul's synthesizer solo impeccably tasteful and Mr. Pastorius' bass work full of modest fervor and very supportive on this "Fast City" piece?"

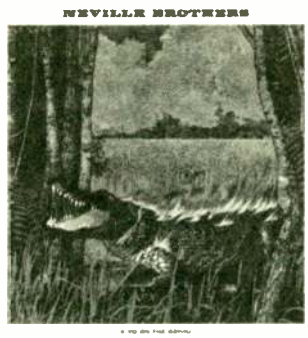
Fortunately, they found little else to groan about though I did catch some undecipherable grumbling at the outset of "Night Passages." The cut begins as a strut—swing similar to "Mr. Gone," but it's not as programmed as its predecessor. Midway through the tune Zawinul and Shorter introduce a bouncy melodic phrase which they repeat while the rhythm section hits stride and sends the tune home cookin.' They also praise Pastorius for his penned contribution "Three Views of a Secret," an airy but substantial ballad which further accentuates the formidable writing talents of Jaco. And pandemonium in plantland struck when they heard Shorter's composition "Port of Entry." The tune, (credited as a studio track which appears to be live) opens with a jungle funkin' section that bursts into a sixteenth-note riddled, rapid fire tuba-in-heat Pastorius solo with newest member Robert Thomas offering decorous support on hand drums. (We favor the decision to keep a precussionist in this band.) Pastorius and Thomas lead the ensemble to the tune's apparent finale, only to have all re-enter with full force for a final attack, exiting with a roar from the crowd and in my sector, plant yelps.

Now that the extensive listening and debates are done, we're happy to tell you that this is the most uncompromising WR album since Pastorius' arrival, and it just might be our favorite since *Black Market*. And yes, that includes their more slickly crafted, commercially appealing *Heavy Weather*. One thing is for certain about *Night Passage:* Columbia will be hard pressed to find a single to pull out of this batch. Damn, there

aren't even any catchy melodies for vocal groups to lyricize. The album is choppy in spots and the band hasn't introduced anything new, in terms of structure. But Pastorius' virtuosic flair seems to have ignited Zawinul and Shorter, both of whom sound revivified and do some of their most ferocious blowing since *I Sing The Body Electric.* I'm not saying this is the ultimate WR record, but this is the record WR needed to make. Not many make Mustafa shake.—*Peter Giron*

ARETHA FRANKLIN
Aretha
(Arista)

This is Franklin's most serious effort in many an album to retrieve the crown belonging to the Queen of Soul—it never fit anyone else since she let it slip off in the mid-'70s. Everyone involved tries so hard to get it just right. Clive Davis at Arista figures he can do it for Dionne Warwick, so he'll do it for Aretha Franklin. Arif Mardin, who produced so many of Franklin's great Atlantic sessions, is in charge of half of *Aretha.* The other half goes to Chuck Jackson, who has worked with Natalie Cole (who pursued the crown actively for a while). Even the Original Sweet Inspirations with Cissy Houston are called in to help out. But the album is a painstaking re-creation that lacks the spark that set Franklin off during her reign. What's missing is good material. Except for "What A Fool Believes" (you'll either love it or find it truly bizarre) and the utterly silly Franklin original, the razzle-dazzle "School Days" (a shameless show stopper), the material is serviceable and malleable, and so what. There is no challenge in *Aretha.* Greatness needs to be inspired, not practiced.



NEVILLE BROTHERS
Fiyo On the Bayou
(A&M)

This has got to be one of the albums of the decade, the hottest single LP to come out of New Orleans in years, probably since Big Mac's famous *Gumbo* (the Dr. adds his keyboards here to "Brother John/Iko Iko"). Individually the Neville Brothers have distinguished themselves via Aaron Neville's '60s solo outing (the great "Tell It Like It Is" spawned a whole school of beautiful R&B ballads at the time); as part of the Meters; and as part of the Wild Tchoupitoulas. Here they outdo the Meters on the title cut, burn your record player down with the incredible "Hey Pocky Way" and cool you to sleep with Aaron's crooning "The Ten Commandments Of Love" while the Persuasions answer him on backing vocals.

TEDDY PENDERGRASS
TP
(Philadelphia International)

At his best, with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes and on his excellent solo debut album, Teddy Pendergrass confidently exuded both a leisurely seductiveness and an often playful but unabashed sexual aggressiveness. But in the last couple of years, generally unexceptional material has led to caricature, "Close the Door," "Turn Off the Lights," and "Do Me" (get it?) encouraging Pendergrass as a manipulating (*and* manipulated, come to think of it) macho blusterer. A real waste of talent.

TP marks the return of the human, romantic Pendergrass. Adjectives such as relaxed, ingratiating, and direct describe most of the album, whether the songs are up-temp or gentle love songs. Pendergrass' two duets with Stephanie Mills are, in fact, more respectful than sexy, somewhat of a miscalculation —after all, soul duets call for interplay and sparks. "I Just Called to Say" recalls the soulful sophistication of the Temptations, in particular David Ruffin. The ambivalence at the heart of the grand romantic ballad, "Can't We Try" (. . . *go away/I wish you'd stay*—at the affair's end), is unforced and moving; Pendergrass reveals himself as a genuine crooner. And there is also some tasty "cooking," including two cuts written and produced by Ashford & Simpson. On their "Girl You Know," Pendergrass balances cock-sure self-satisfaction and guileless pleasure, and the resulting smoke isn't irritating.

CHARLES MINGUS
Something Like a Bird
(Atlantic)

Ever since Mingus' death every jazz critic in the world, myself included, has labored in vain to write something adequate to our sense of the man's greatness and to suggest the size of the hole he left in us when he split. Still loved, still missed, still helping keep us alive, it's no sin against his memory to say that the albums that came out of his last recording session—*Me, Myself An Eye* was the first, and *Bird* is the second—aren't among his best. Nor is it surprising. Already confined to a wheelchair by the illness that would kill him in Mexico a few months later, Mingus was able only to attend the session, not play at it, and the new compositions his indefatigable creativity provided seem, with some exceptions, only half-used, sails only partly filled by the full wind of his creative fury. It must have been a strange gig. In the studio with the dying composer, how would a band, a set of soloists, work up the necessary enthusiasm and energy. The sun broke through at times: "Carolyn 'Keki' Mingus," the earlier album's ballad, sounds like a classic from where I sit, and some of the music from the new album rises to an appropriate height, here and there.

It's more of a blowing date than a composer's album. The title tune, all thirty one and a half minutes of it, is for the most part a series of solos on the changes of something like Charlie Parker's "Confirmation" broken up by some wonderfully dense and energetic ensemble melody lines—Mingus' usual big band idiom, roaring and farting, developing subtexts faster than you can count them, doubling back on itself to bite its own tail, digging in. The blowing is only intermittently successful—Ricky Ford, Ronnie Cuber, Pepper Adams, Bob Neloms, the alto contrasts of Lee Konitz, Charles McPherson and an unnaturally fleet-fingered George Coleman provide most of the fire—and the ensembles are played with some vigor. A good blowing date, all in all, with some great Mingus lines set too far from each other for maximum

thrills. The album finishes with "Farewell Farwell," in memory of the painter Farwell Taylor, for whom the greater "Far Wells, Mill Valley" was written over twenty years ago. The best moments come from Ford, who has been boning up on his Dexter, Konitz, Jimmy Knepper and a telepathic Dannie Richmond (Larry Coryell also takes a silly solo with too many notes in it). It's hard to know how to feel about these last two albums. It's Mingus all right and some of the energy is there, but the music doesn't rise up and call you by your secret name the way it used to, and it's impossible not to feel sadder that he's gone.—*Rafi Zabor*

WHITESNAKE
Come An' Get It
(Mirage)

Whitesnake is staking out top hard rock honors in the tradition of classic Free. On the title track, lead singer David Coverdale takes on Paul Rodgers' most soulful blues rocking style and cuts him cold. Coverdale, who formed Whitesnake out of the ashes of Deep Purple, when he matched his ex-Purple mates keyboardist Jon Lord and drummer Ian Paice with the stellar guitar duo of Bernie Marsden and Micky Moody, has built his band into one of England's top attractions.

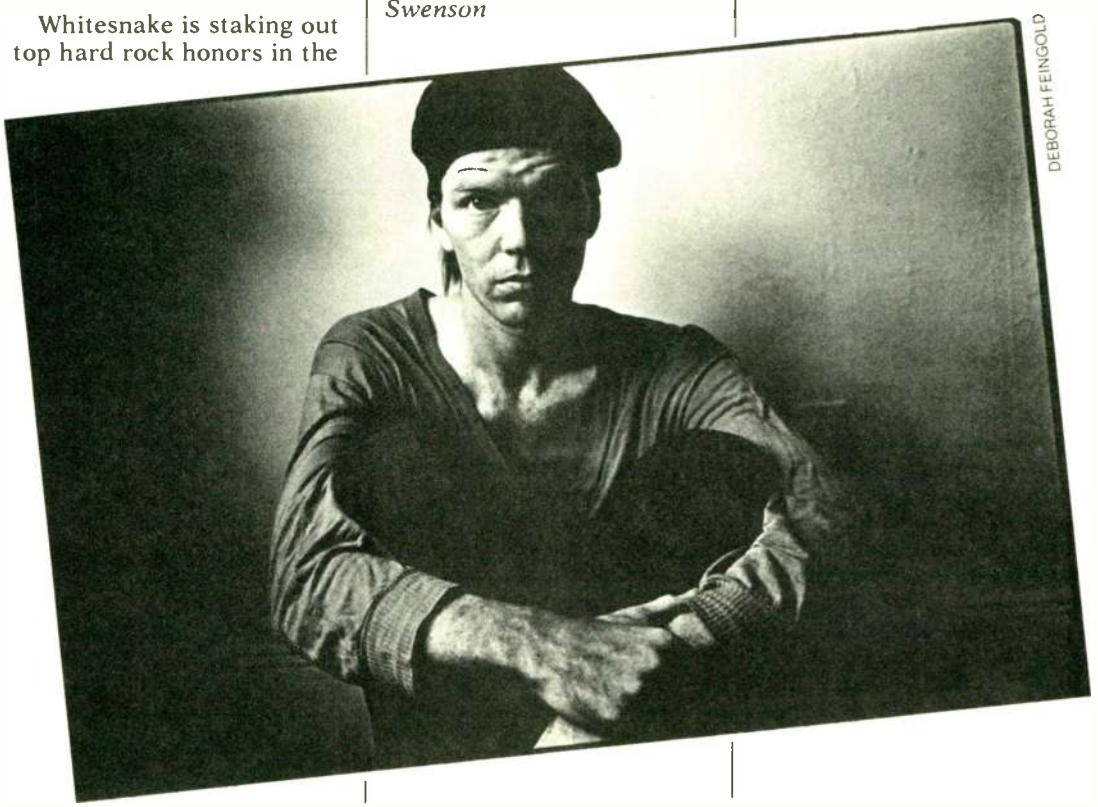
"Lonely Days, Lonely Nights" (not to be confused with the Bee Gees track of the same name) displays the band's mastery of the melodic touch inside a vital, hard-edged sound, which is the secret to their success. Lord plunks out a honky tonk piano foundation for the crunching anthem, "Wine, Women and Song," then contributes a Deep Purple ("Hush") style organ solo on "Till the Day I Die." Marsden's guitar highlight comes on the magnificently atmospheric "Child of Babylon," while Moody's classic high intensity slide playing can be heard on "Hit An' Run." Move over, Bad Company—Whitesnake is coming through.—*John Swenson*

THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT
The Turn of a Friendly Card
(Arista)

Producer/engineer Alan Parsons plays the studio like some people play the guitar—all chops and no feeling. Coasting on the sound that made him famous when he engineered P. Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, Parsons presents more of the same progressive muzak that graced his last four records. For an album about card-playing, this isn't much of a gamble.

THE JIM CARROLL BAND
Catholic Boy
(Atco)

Like spiritual sister Patti Smith and other poets who graft their rhyme to rock, tenement boy Jim Carroll rises and falls on the strength of his voice and backing group. His ratty singspeak and the surprisingly pedestrian bash behind it are not always strong enough to shoulder the burden of pain, despair, and streetcorner sacrifices in his verse. But when bard and band click on "City Drops Into the Night" and the punked-up eulogy "People Who Died," they make powerful medicine.


DEBORAH FEINGOLD

NRBQ
Tiddlywinks
(Rounder)

All aboard for fun time. This madcap foursome stirs a heady brew of R&B, C&W, rockabilly, and cornball lounge jazz and plays it like the Marx Brothers on moonshine. The Beatlesque tones of "That I Get Back Home," heavy metallic jockability of "You Can't Hide" (a mouldy oldie from the band's '69 debut), and cool T. Monkabilly of Terry Adams' piano showcase "Hobbies" are only three of the eleven different good times to be had here. And there are seven other albums where this came from.

WARREN ZEVON
Stand In the Fire
(Asylum)

My first suspicion about this album was Warren Zevon put it out to give himself some breathing room between studio records. (In a phone interview after his *Excitable Boy* was released, not realizing every Zevon lyric was slowly etched in blood and booze, I asked him if he had anything written for the next one. There was a long pause before he said, "That's a horrible thing to ask.") But even if that breather is part of *Stand In the Fire*'s reason for being, the result is a smoking, sparking and committed set of ten songs—two of them newly written.

The new songs are presumably etched in blood alone, because Warren has thrown off the booze monkey—thus the werewolf who was "drinking a pina colada at Trader Vic's" is now on Perrier in the live version. "Stand In the Fire" could use a wee drop of something; it's two-thirds of a good song about living inside rock 'n' roll, which means it blanches noticeably next to his LP's cover of "Bo Diddley's A Gunslinger/Bo Diddley," which takes command of the same territory with an imperious shrug.

"The Sin" is one of those songs in which Zevon works out with his private demons to the tune of a big bass drum (there's more than a little of the Stones' "Starfucker" in it). It works well, and so does the

remainder of the line-up on this deceptively loose-sounding live document. Zevon makes a most prescient selection of his best slam-bang rockers, throws in a version of "Mohammed's Radio" that remains haunting despite some funny ad-libs, does full justice to his mini-drama, "Jeannie Needs A Shooter." A full-bore rhythm section and tangy guitar leads from David Landau and Zeke Zirngiebel are mixed just right against Zevon's boomtown-saloon piano playing. Zevon not only stands in the fire here—he keeps a cocky grin on his face as he does it.—*Fred Schruers*

DEXY'S MIDNIGHT RUNNERS
Searching For the Young Soul Rebels
(EMI America)

Now meet the Self-Righteous Brothers, an English white soul band that's too concerned with what it's saying—as opposed to how it says it. DMR, which recently suffered a major split in the ranks, attacks ace tunes like "Burn It Down," "There, There, My Dear," and "Geno" with a tight Stax-Volt sound. But the liner notes, "theme" production touches, and their mythic quest for a lost tribe of British young screams "MESSAGE." In aiming for the conscience, they miss the soul by a mile.

JUNIE MORRISON
(Columbia)

Places like Michigan and Ohio have traditionally been fountainheads of funk music because, as anybody knows who's lived in the Midwest, they're funky places to be. Factory rhythms, car and truck rhythms, and just flatland rhythms—it's no accident that Motown, George Clinton, the Ohio Players, Earth, Wind & Fire, and even James Brown (don't forget, King Records was in Cincinnati) all spent some formative musical years crankin' it out on the one in the great American breadbasket. And if you remember the Ohio Players' first national hit, the eternally weird early '70s novelty-dance groover "Funky Worm," then you've got a bead on what Junie Morrison is all about. Morrison, a Dayton native, left the Ohio Players soon after "Funky Worm," made a couple of solo albums, joined the Parliament Funkadelic, and co-authored such P-Funk stompers as "Groove Allegiance," "Cholly," and "One Nation Under A Groove." Following last year's heralded *Bread Alone*, *"5"* (his second album on a major label), continues and expands Morrison's unusual mixture of gritty funk, romantic melodies, and lavish arrangements that have had a profound influence on much modern R&B, and which are Midwestern down to the bone.

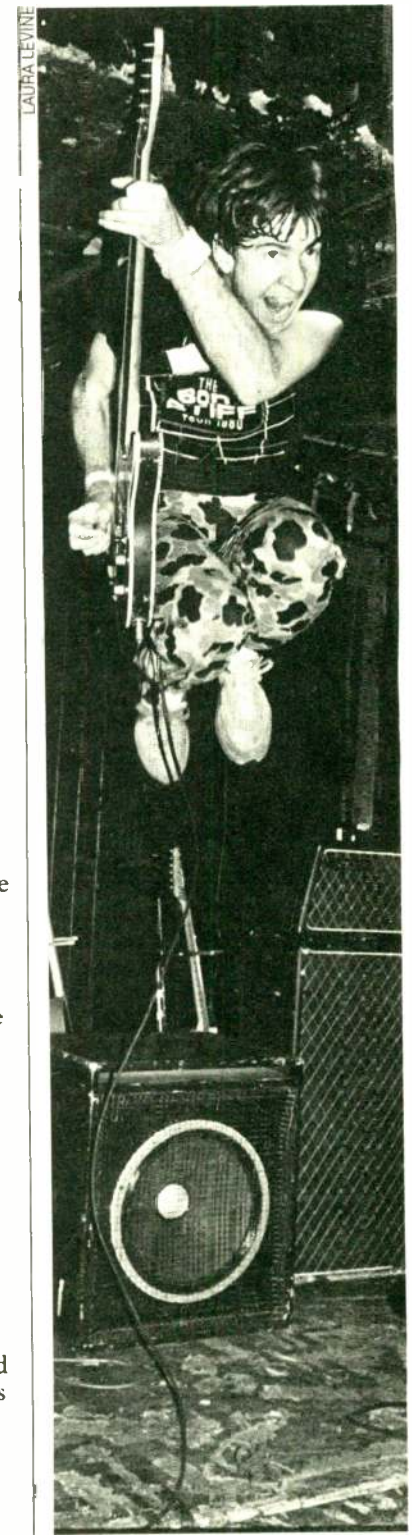
Morrison plays most of the instruments here: hard, backbeating drums spare-but-precise bass; slashing funk guitar, and a florid, gospel-cum-jazz piano style that adds elegance to the electronics (check his expansively percussive piano solo on "A Taste Of Love"). Horn charts are intricate, brightly melodic, and constantly changing—another romantic touch—and his roughly sweet tenor voice, usually swathed in four female backups, has that floating quality that George Clinton started using so convincingly in the '70s. In other words, this is very dense, challenging pop-funk, with strong roots, and even Junie's lyrics carry a kind of down-home flavor that's soul all the way, as on "Victim of Love," which begins: *You were livin' there across the tracks/All my money was across my back—oh baby*.... In the chugging, gospelish ballad in 6/8, "Cry Me A River," Junie's romantically emotional side combines with a skilled, innate melodic sense, and while I don't claim to be an A&R executive, my guess is the song will turn up being covered by other artists. "Rappin' About Rappin (Uh—Uh—Uh)," the album's first single, is a fairly laidback number that, like a small and tasty hors d'oeuvre, doesn't really indicate how sizzling the main dishes that follow will be. As it stands, *"5"* is one of the most satisfying dance-funk noshes served up this year.—*Crispin Cioe*

SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET
Border Wave
(Takoma)

In a strangely pleasing way, *Border Wave* sounds at once dated (vintage 1965) and remarkably contemporary. The reason is that rock has returned to the values leader Doug Sahm has always stood for—simplicity, raunch and sincerity. Then, too, there's the music itself—Augie Meyers' shrill, peppy Vox organ work has been widely imitated in New Wave circles, and the master proves here that the original is still the best. The new songs, particularly "It Was Fun While It Lasted" and "Tonight, Tonight," are upbeat and spunky, while intriguing covers of "Who'll Be The Next In Line" and "You're Gonna Miss Me" add new lustre to old material. Reunion LPs like this one often promise much but deliver little—*Border Wave* is an impressive exception.

JOE "KING" CARRASCO and the CROWNS
(Hannibal)

Don't listen to this album. Just put it on and start shaking. Carrasco updates the Tex-Mex sound of Sir Douglas and Sam the Sham: drunk and frenzied with a lilting two-step beat. Kris Cummings' swirling, sinuous Farfisa sets the tone for rockers like "Susan Friendly" and "Let's Get


LAURA LEVINE

Pretty" as well as the more Mexican "Buena" and "Caca de Vaca." Carrasco's fuzzy guitar chording takes it into motorbike-like overdrive. His vocals, though, are a bit tame and this LP doesn't have the range of 1978's *Joe "King" Carrasco with El Molino* (Lisa Records, San Antonio, TX). But the pace is just gear-fab frenetic.

REO SPEEDWAGON
Hi Infidelity
(Epic)

The lighter side of heavy metal, REO forges rock-hard hooks and durable melodies at their anvil. Sure, these are AOR sounds too, but the result here is more power than pomp: Gary Richrath's crunchy guitar, Kevin Cronin's boyish but resonant tenor, and a rhythm section that hangs tough on PG-rated rockers like "Shakin' It Loose" and the Bo Diddley-style bust-out "Don't Let Him Go." Small wonder this is a top ten album.

PLASTICS
(Island)

Originality is not this Japanese band's strong suit. Toshi Nakanichi has his David Byrne psychotenor down pat and the striking Chica Sato specializes in Yoko/B-52's style scatspeak. "Cars" is a Devoid "Taxman" and "Parks" sounds like Eno-era Bowie tackling Lou Reed's "Satellite of Love." But there is an exotic flavor and arty good humor to the Plastics' customized Anglo-American technopop. Besides, their Akron and Athens, Georgia soul brothers could stand the competition.

JUDAS PRIEST
Point of Entry
(Columbia)

Neither as clubfooted as Black Sabbath nor as witty and facile as Blue Oyster Cult, this British kamkaze squad accepts the limitations of their chosen genre, heavy metal, and then beats the pants off of them. The songs are nothing new under the sun, but buried under those crunchola riffs and Rob Halford's full moon howl, how can you tell?

STIV BATORS
Disconnected
(Bomp)

Former Dead Boy vocalist cools the Iggy-isms in favor of a more competent hard-rock approach on his first solo album. The result is a young, loud, and snotty Tom Petty, which is actually quite refreshing considering how many ersatz Iggys are crawling around L.A. these days. Add ten points for a bullish cover of the Electric Prunes' "I Had Too Much to Dream Last Night."

THE DAMNED
(I.R.S.)

A good Damned album. Hard as it may be to believe, the cool ghouls of British bondage-era punk are back at the head of the class with a surprisingly sophisticated entry that could be their *Hades Calling*. Among the strange yet somehow appealing bedfellows to be heard here are Captain Sensible's wall-of-sound guitars, resonant Beach Boy-o harmonies ("Billy Kid Games"), crash'n'burn rockers, playful psychedelia like "13th Floor Vendetta," and the toe-tapping bombast of the modestly titled "History of the World Part 1." Where the Damned used to be funny, now they're just plain fun. Who would have thought they had it in them?

JEFFERSON STARSHIP
Modern Times
(Grunt)

The Frisco rock space shuttle, with Grace Slick aboard, touches down on anonymous hard-rock turf in six of the nine tracks here. The combination of the Kantner/Slick/Mickey Thomas vocal axis and the anthemic quality of Kantner's songwriting lifts "Wild Eyes (Angel)" and "Modern Times" a bit above ordinary.

TUXEDOMOON
Desire
(Ralph)

After Bathing at Baxter's thirteen years on. While this drummerless quartet has more in common musically with Britain's post-punk futurist mob, they evoke the spirit of Acid Age daring here, hacking away at the jagged edge of the new psychedelia and coming up with startling sound sculptures like "Jinx," the hypnotic "Victims of the Dance," and their mischievous rewrite of "Holiday for Strings" (retitled "Holiday for Plywood"). Drugs could never improve on this.

GOOD RATS
Great American Music
(Great American)

This band, a Long Island rock 'n' roll institution, seems to suffer from the same jinx bugging Joe Ely. But like the little bar band that could, the Rats keep plying their trade and with this album (their seventh) their time may finally have come. Singer Peppi Marchello writes vigorously catchy songs with clever lyrical twists ("New York Survivor," "Audience," "Rock and Roll Point of View") and the band grinds them out with neo-heavy metal fervor. So why let Long Island bars have all this fun?

AC/DC
Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap
(Atlantic)

The late Bon Scott roars again on this slab of highly combustible megaboogie from 1976, most of it previously unissued here. Ears, prepare to bleed.

PAUL COX/RETNA LTD

JOAN JETT
Bad Reputation
(Boardwalk)

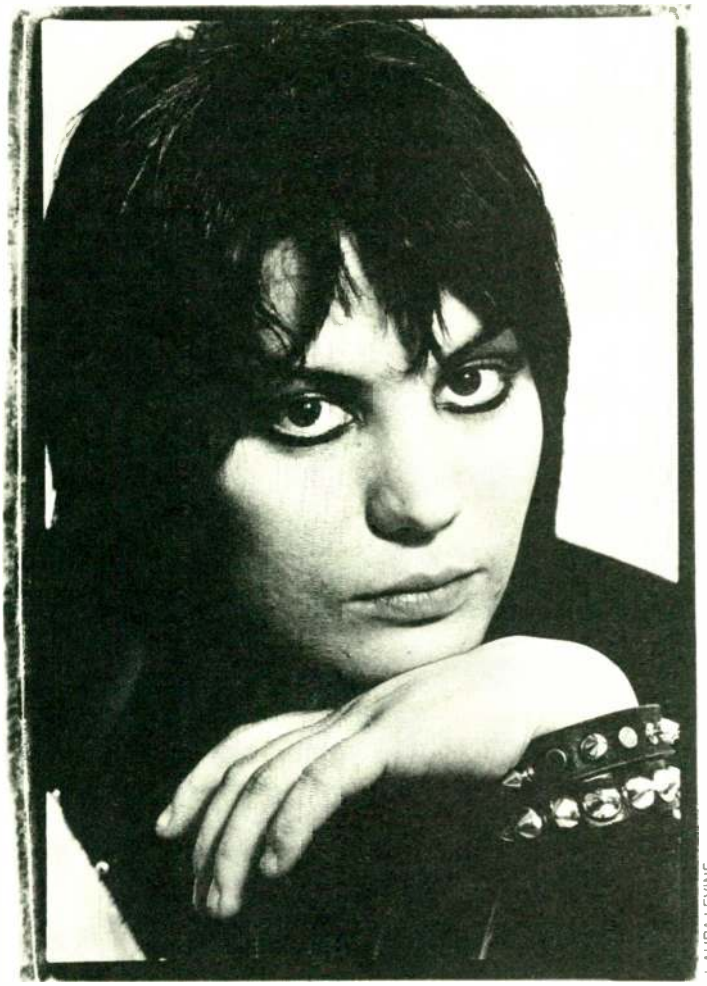
Ex-Runaway picks up where Suzi Quatro left off with occasional help from some Sex Pistols and Blondie boys. She makes a damn good case for the glamrock revival and even goes to the source, covering two Gary Glitter tunes. Not only is it fun, but it sparkles with *commercial potential.* Well, Kim Fowley, what do you think of your little girl now?

PYLON
Gyrate
(DB)

With titles like "Danger," "Precaution," "Volume," and "Gravity," it's no wonder Pylon's songs are as bleak as a lonely highway late at night. The group's sound is equally unsettling, with Vanessa Ellison's crazed, paranoid vocals the highlight. Her untamed shrieking has a tense, constricted edge to it, making her a sort of new wave Janis Joplin. The band complements her wailing with lean, laconic punk/funk riffs, Michael Lachowski's mobile bass in the lead. Like Gang of Four, Pylon makes terse but eloquent rock 'n' roll out of simple scraps of sound. Another singular group from Athens, Georgia, birthplace of the B-52s. (DB Records/432 Moreland Ave., NE/Atlanta, GA 30307).

THE BRAINS
Electronic Eden
(Mercury)

After scoring with one of the best (if not *the* best) debut albums of 1980, this sorely underrated Atlanta band delivers a five-star followup. Vocalist-keyboard man-songwriter Tom Gray specializes in songs of suburban angst, jacked-up by guitarist Rick Price's neo-heavy metal grind and colored in shades of psycho by Gray's spooky yowl and phantom-of-the-punk-club synthesizer work. Like "Money Changes Everything" on the last LP, "Heart in the Street" is an instant classic. And the instrumental "Ambush" could turn out to be the New Wave "Telstar."



LAURA LEVINE

CARL WILSON
(Caribou)

To say this Beach Boy's solo debut is an improvement over his brother Dennis' is to damn it with faint praise. One half vanilla funk and the other faceless if soothing ballads, the LP is at best an uncluttered showcase for Wilson's distinctive warbling and his crafty way with a songhook. The Beach Boys' strength is obviously in numbers.

MARSHALL TUCKER BAND
Dedicated
(Warner Bros.)

The best album in many moons by this yahoo rock and campfire pop band. The playing is tight and to the point, Tom Dowd's production rockhard, and the songs warm and inviting. Even "This Time I Believe," which borders on MOR-Doobieland, has an inescapable charm. A fitting tribute to the late Tommy Caldwell.

THE JAM
Sound Affects
(Polydor)

What the Clash now take two and three albums to do the Jam still do in one, if you don't count the free single included in early copies. And where the Clash often sound forced by their own frustration with the punk form to jump on every musical bandwagon that passes by, the Jam accept the limitations of their basic sound—Who-ish three-piece thunder—while adding effective dabs of tonal color (horns, keyboards, even dub-wise mixing on the instrumental "Music For the Last Couple") in those spaces left by Paul Weller's pithy, poignant songwriting pen. So what if "Start!" is a fearless cop of Beatle George's "Taxman!" Have you ever heard the one about "My Sweet Lord" sounding like . . .

HOLLY and the ITALIANS
The Right To Be Italian
(Epic)

This band boasts the same producer, and the same brand of inspiredly arch amateuriism, as Blondie's first album. Singer-guitarist Holly Vincent brims with offbeat charm; on a post-Ramones track like "Baby Gets It All," she makes her limits work for her. Guest Jerry Harrison's synthesizers underscore, rather than clutter. Any *artiste* who celebrates Channel 5 and cola slurpees knows she's dealing in junk food; the band's logo, an airline passenger clutching himself before a crash, shows she knows how dangerous junk-rocking can be.

JOHN CALE
Honi Soit
(A&M)

According to rock's other prominent Cale, "Honi Soit qui mal y pense" is a slice of medieval French meaning "Evil to those who think it," or "stick it in your ear." Which is exactly where Cale's first studio LP in almost seven years belongs. Just imagine the Freudian hellfires of *Fear* ("Wilson Joliet," "Russian Roulette") stoked with the crystalline melodicism of *Paris 1919* ("Dead or Alive," "Magic & Lies"). And "Streets of Laredo" upholds Cale's twisted tradition of turning old classics upside down.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
I.R.S. Greatest Hits
Vols. 2 & 3
(I.R.S.)

New wave entrepreneurs, the International Record Syndicate, pat themselves on the back with this two-record sampler of acts and tracks they've released over the last two years. Obvious selling points are the $9.98 list price and rare tracks by the Police (their debut 45 "Fall Out"), John Cale, and the Cramps, but then you also get an inexpensive chance to savor the eccentric joys of Skafish, Wazmo Nariz, Fashion, the Fall . . .

FRANK ZAPPA
Tinsel Town Rebellion
(Barking Pumpkin)

That's right, folks—it's another album by Frank Zappa. If it occurs to some that the market has been glutted with Zappa products since he severed ties with Warner Bros., it's only because he has released two double albums and one single LP on his own Zappa Records while WB almost simultaneously unleashed *Studio Tan, Sleep Dirt* and *Orchestral Favorites*—all in the past two and a half years.

The always prolific Zappa seems to have been rejuvenated by his new lease on labels, and much of the material on this double live set illustrates the melodic, accessible, almost fifties approach evident on *Sheik Yerbouti* and *Joe's Garage* (especially "Ain't Got No Heart," "For The Young Sophisticate" and the title song, an appropriately cynical view of the L.A. new wave scene).

Recorded over the course of his last two or three tours, *Tinsel Town* features Zappa's multi-guitar band, with Ray White, Waren Cucurullo, Steve Vai, Denney Walley, and Ike Willis in various combinations. Zappa discovered Willis working as a roadie at a college concert a few years back, and he has developed into one of the strongest vocalists to pass through the Zappa band. Willis provides two of the album's many highlights, the raunchy "Easy Meat" and a blues shuffle called "Bamboozled By Love." A vocal highpoint of a different sort is reached with keyboardist Bob Harris' falsetto part on "Love Of My Life" (from *Cruisin' With Ruben & the Jets*).

Most of the four sides are comprised of previously unrecorded Zappa compositions, although a few welcome reminders of the past are tossed in. The LP closes with "Brown Shoes Don't Make It" and "Peaches III." This is the third time Zappa has recorded "Peaches En Regalia," but this version may be the best.

Most of the cuts are fairly succinct, under five minutes, and usually stick with one theme, although "Easy Meat" degenerates into a tiresome jam. For those Zappa fanatics who are also guitar fanatics, the inner sleeve includes an order form for Zappa's three all-instrumental albums: *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar, Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More,* and *Return Of The Son Of Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar.* These are available only by mail order, from Barking Pumpkin Records, Box 5510, Terre Haute, IN 47805. I've heard two tracks from *Return Of The Son . . .*—the Metheny-esque "Stucco Homes" and "Canard Du Jour," which should be retitled "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Bouzouki"—and was duly impressed. This makes—what?—thirty-something albums by the Mother, and I can't imagine not owning a single one of them.—*Dan Forte*

JACK DeJOHNETTE'S SPECIAL EDITION
Tin Can Alley
(ECM)

The boppish little cut, coming up first, preserves an astonishing continuity with the first *Special Edition*, though DeJohnette's two horn front line has changed and he's been involved in a number of other projects since. Proves two things perhaps: how clear his aims are for his individual bands, and that he really is a classicist, a collector and refiner of the tradition. Here, he distills Ornette, Dolphy, Sonny's trios, Trane, and Miles' last quintet in ideal stasis and supple form, slightly dry, with some of the aroma of the gallery, the museum. (But records are like that; it's a more rough-house band live.) On the first, celebrated album, what emerged most clearly from the group identity were Arthur Blythe's knife-edged alto solos, for which David Murray's eloquent muttering, mumbles and cries provided an effective foil. Now there's the much-improved Chico Freeman on tenor and bass clarinet and a real find, John Purcell, heard most often on baritone sax, and the tone of the album has deepened and darkened correspondingly. On bass, Peter Warren maintains his importance with his solid time-playing, excellent choice of notes and ability to team with the leader. He's simply better at playing with DeJohnette than any other bassist I've heard. On drums, Jack the classicist presents Elvin, Philly, Tony, Haynes in synthesis, the most comprehensive style on the axe today. A pianoless quartet: earth, air and fire, no water.

The second cut provides it; DeJohnette plays lots of Jarrett-like piano, and I believe the drum part is overdubbed. "Pastel Rhapsody" takes us into new areas for the band, though everyone's been writing Ellington tributes lately and the "Lush Life" tag, also used by Mingus on "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love," comes from Billy Strayhorn. The standout is Purcell's blithe alto. On side two, Warren's casually boppish "Riff Raff" features the composer substituting cello for bass, gaining greater clarity and finer team polyphony when the two reeds, using a strategy familiar from the first album, enter and take their solos simultaneously.

"The Gri Gri Man" is played solely by DeJohnette, a reprise of experiments past and an omen, perhaps, of solo albums to come. He's on congas and tympani in addition to the trap set, but the most creepily effective business on the cut is his organ work, a few sustained dissonances in the manner of Miles Davis. Otherwise, it's a glamorous throwaway.

The funky two-beat of "I Know" concludes the album. Freeman plays a little like Murray, as if the role's there to be inhabited, and DeJohnette echoes the monumental indecorousness of Rahsaan Roland Kirk in a raunchy, sexy vocal: *When she puts her sweet, juicy red lips up against mine—I KNOW!* The recorded audience interpolated toward the end of the cut sounds like deep fat boiling up around a basket of fries. Why's it there? For all the boozy braggadocio there's little real elation on the cut, or the rest of the album, perhaps because it's been done with such care. As on the first album, DeJohnette's production, erroneously credited by this reporter and others to Manfred Eicher, practically combs the harmonics into a permanent wave. I remember being dismayed by the neatness of the first album when it first came out, then playing it nonstop for months. *Tin Can Alley* will likely go the same route. Without Blythe, who knew how to set himself off and make himself remembered, it's more of an ensemble effort than ever, goes down smoothly, and yeah, there's delight enough in that last "I *know*!" I hear Manfred was upset.—*Rafi Zabor*

Pat Metheny & Lyle Mays

PAT METHENY AND LYLE MAYS
As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls
(ECM)

This is a duo album (despite the third-wheel participation of Nana Vasconcelos on percussion and vocals) that relies more on compositional collaboration than on the improvisational empathy of a traditional jazz duet. The give and take process seems to have taken place more at the drawing board rather than in spontaneous performance.

There's nothing wrong with this approach as long as the

writing is edited and the material is not allowed to expand beyond its means. Half of this record I find frivolous and self-serving, though not in the extreme. Fortunately, every record has two sides, and the second is a success.

Side one encompasses over 20 minutes of title track, the music living up to the rambling nature of its moniker. Crowd noises are heard while straight eights repeat and bombs explode beneath. The introduction, right? Sure is. However, the sections that follow never really seem to gel. Variations are apparent; a little percussion for foot tappin' here, some haunted-house night-at-the-opera organ there, and can that be Metheny reading the serial number off his guitar—"38. . . 14. . . 55. . . 3. . .!"? Seriously, Pat, stuff like this is better left to Fripp or Eno or, better yet, to the Count on *Sesame Street.* To make matters worse, throughout these quartered-off sections Metheny's guitar presence is virtually non-existent. In fact, Metheny's guitar work is way down in the mix, incorporated only to lend support to Mays' multi-keyboard textures and to delineate the harmonic foundation. With Metheny taking a backseat role, Mays is left with the unenviable task of maintaining listener interest alone.

Luckily, side two steers clear of extended departures and manages to condense the experiments of side one into more workable form. The first tune, "Ozark," is a frolicking hoedown reminiscent of Metheny's *New Chatauqua.* Mays' solo relies mostly on rhythmic jabs rather than flowing lines and, though the technique works here, I harbor doubts as to his improvisational capacity on up-tempo tunes. The next two cuts are the album's gems. "September Fifteenth" is an involved (like the title track) yet subtly evolving (unlike the title track) composition that doesn't tangle itself with overly indulgent gestures. The piece begins with a simple melody on plucked nylon by Metheny while Mays blankets the remaining space with synthesized strings as tender as can be duplicated by electronics. Both musicians take solo spots, and here Mays excels with a lighter side of Keith Jarrett acoustic piano cadenza that fits splendidly. On "It's for You," May's hallowed, distant synthesizer (the same shaded tones heard before on "The Search" from *American Garage)* leads into a polished and welcome Metheny electric solo amid simple yet apt changes. Metheny's plugged-in sound is immediately identifiable and consistent with his past recordings. As usual his left hand technique is lucid, as he glides over rather than grinds into frets, His approach to the instrument is more vertical than horizontal, with a lot of sliding single-string execution. In contrast, Metheny's less aggressive, pamper-the-strings acoustic touch is wholly unremarkable, and bolstered on recordings by ECM's now (in)famous studio techniques. It can complement, but it can't lead.

In spots, this music appears to have been written for the Pat Metheny Group minus one and a half members. Be that as it may, since the release of *80/81* last year, I've become more aware and appreciative of Metheny's diverse capabilities as composer, leader and sideman. His willingness to extend his talents into diverse musical environments assures him a place in the recording world for years to come. Though Falls doesn't compare with the darker, more venturesome *80/81* there probably shouldn't be any comparison—*Peter Giron*

THE JACKSONS
Triumph
(Epic)
BOOTSY
Ultra Wave
(Warner Bros.)

Once a solid state boogie unit, the funk is breaking off into intricate components. Case in point: The Jacksons have a pop/fusion/funk component, and Bootsy has a polyrhythmic/art funk module. Both groups (Bootsy's crew

lost the name of the "Rubber Band" in court over the summer, due to the allegations that a white rockabilly band in the early '70s had the same moniker. Hmmm? . . .) will revolutionize a lot of the music that is to come.

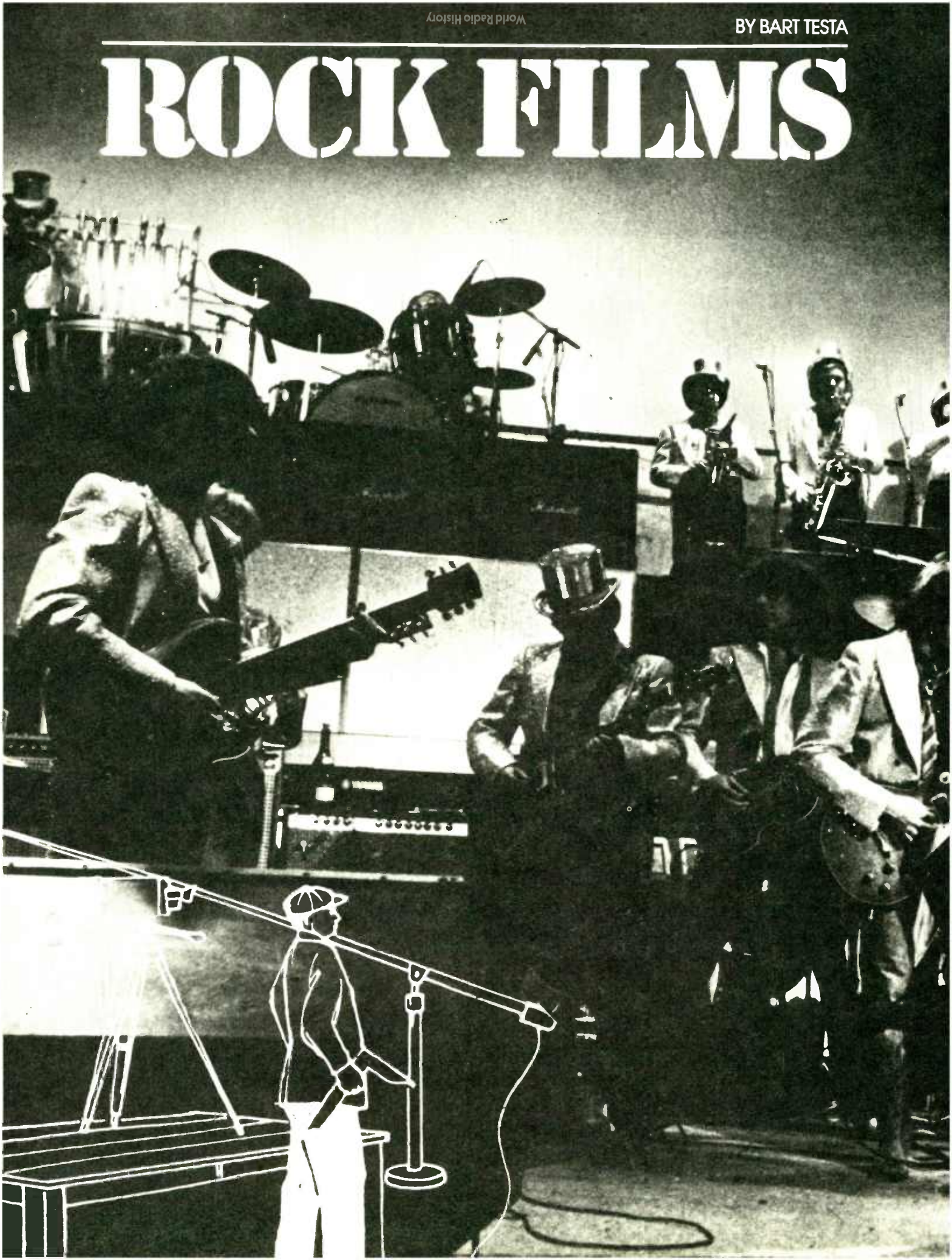
The Jacksons' *Triumph* is self-explanatory. The lyrics are uncomplicated, the arrangements tight, and the vocals are typical Jackson. Again, Michael Jackson proves why he is one of the most para-talented performers in the world, showing his versatility in arranging and co-writing most of the songs. He lends his brothers the same spirit he utilized on his mega-selling *Off The Wall* album. Marlon, Jackie, Tito, and Randy layer colorful vocal patterns on cuts like "Lovely One" a muvic (movemusic) hit in the dizzcos, and the irresistible orchestrated pop of "Can You Feel It," geared toward a univeral oneness with mankind. One of the most interesting tunes is Mike's "Heartbreak Hotel." It is eerie, but danceable.

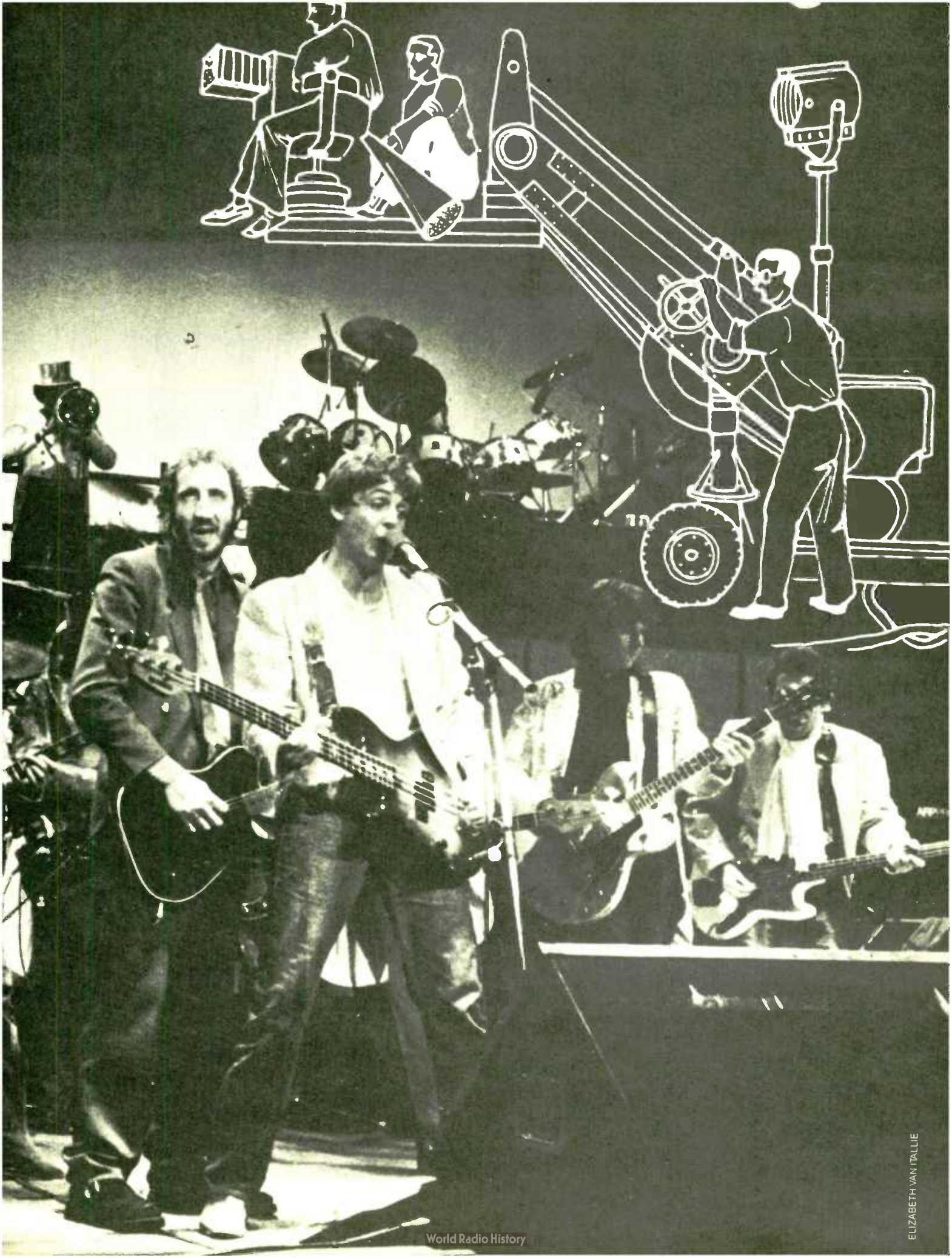
They led themselves to some fusion on "Wondering Who," which transpires from their trademark drop-pocket-hand-clap-rhythm workout, to a vocoder Hancock/Wonder electric nonsense syllable vocal at the end of the song. *Triumph* is the Jacksons' latest victory on vinyl, and a must for any music lover.

Also a must for any music lover, especially romancers of the so called "new wave" fad is Bootsy Collins' *Ultra Wave.* He worked on this highly secret project for an entire 12 months or more, and his painstaking diligence has certainly paid off in creating one of the most highly progressive funk albums of the year. None of the tunes, including "Mug Push," "F-Encounter," or "Sound Crack" are standard funk; this is electrified music with emphasis on synthesizers constructing concurrent modal devices against heavy pocket drum configurations. Bernie Worrell and what may be Junie Morrison (or Joel "Razor Sharp" Johnson) "throw down" on one of the most intense keyboard backups (while Boosty plucks, ploinks, and pops his Space Bass into sonic symmetrical designs that surround the rhythm section) on "It's A Musical." My favorite is "Fat Cat," a message song dealing with politicians controlling and constipating the nation's monetary flow. The liquid melody slips from a synthesizer line reminiscent of Squeeze's "Another Nail In My Heart" and the chopped licks of James Brown's "Licking Stick." Bootsy and Bernie (itinerant keyboardist for the Talking Heads) put the rhythm section on edge with buoyant trade-offs between Space Bass and Moog Bass. This cut is instruction for avant grade cerebral runkers (rock/funkers), like David Byrne. While he did an admirable job encoding Brownistic/Clintonian/Fela polyrhythms on "Born Under Punches" (from *Remain in Light),* Bootsy goes a step further and governs each and every individual beat into a highly organized progro-tech groovatropolis. Rick James, Michael Henderson, Ray Parker, stop wading in the funk; Bootsy is riding the *Ultra Wave!—Barry Michael Cooper*

BY BART TESTA

ROCK FILMS





ELIZABETH VAN ITALLIE

A few years ago, record companies and film studios were looking forward to lucrative cooperation, tie-ins and cross-media promotions. But after several seasons that saw the proliferation of videotaped rock—in the form of canned concerts and studio-shot promo tapes—filling out TV "concert" shows, the 1981 movie season unsurprisingly confirmed the end of these expectations. It was obvious that the time is over when a fan will plunk down $4.50 to see a feature documentary like *The Song Remains the Same* when so many faves turn up on the tube. And if any tie-ins with rock really worked, they were in the pop or pop-country vein rather than in rock.

This year, no popular alternative to the feature documentary was developed and the few fiction films that dealt with rock predictably showed a tendency to treat the music not as a specific form, a way of life or a social phenomenon but as a branch of traditional showbusiness.

The two major rock-oriented successes of the year, *Fame* and *The Idolmaker,* were strong indicators of this trend. *Fame* deals with a group of performing arts high school students struggling to master their crafts in New York while undergoing the usual trials of movie adolescence. *Fame* is almost as comfortable depicting cellists as it is with the big post-disco production numbers, which could have just as effectively used traditional show tunes, because *Fame* owes much more to musical theater than it does to rock.

Serving as a sort of sequel to *American Hot Wax,* which concerned a crucial period in the career of D.J. Allen Freed, and *The Buddy Holly Story, The Idolmaker* moves on a few years, from the heated 50's to the cooling early 60's. A hustling young manager (played by Ray Sharkey) discovers a talentless young hunk and turns him into the latest rage. Although his find is more intensely rocking and theatrical than the real Bobby Rydells of the period, it is the Brill Building era that forms the scenery for the movie. A modest realism in treating the ethnic (Italian-American) aspirations of the hero-manager in *The Idolmaker* suggests the New York of *Saturday Night Fever.* The film takes place in the nightclubs and record company offices seen long ago in a Paul Anka documentary, *Lonely Boy,* but what the makers of that short bit of *cinema verite* saw as a silly new world of teen rocking and rolling circa 1961 appears in *The Idolmaker* as removed from a concrete time and place as Judy Garland in *A Star Is Born.* City streets and period suburbs appear, but the cost-of-fame/my-way-or-no-way-at-all tribulations are *The Idolmaker* folded into the standard manila envelope of showbiz mythology.

Almost as if to test the limits of that envelope, Neil Diamond remade its archetypal film, Al Jolson's 1927 *The Jazz Singer.* Although performing his regular overblown pop rock, rather than Jolson's black-faced vaudeville, Diamond endures the very same agonies of rebellion against his Jewish family, conflict with his father, a synagogue cantor, and the long claw to the top. Eventually, the heroically smarmy sentiments of Diamond's climactic showstoppers are supposed to resolve it all but Diamond's style is overweening, self-centered and smug. Jolson's down-on-one-knee "Mammy" served to expand the singer's family to the crowd across the footlights. There is something terribly wrong with rock as rite of cultural passage out of the ethnic ghetto—its built-in rebellion and arrogance probably—and *The Jazz Singer* capsizes badly both as a rock movie and a remake.

Built up over months of breathless press coverage during 1980, the big hype in rock movies was neo-country/rock that finally hit the screens with *Urban Cowboy* and *Honeysuckle Rose,* with after shocks running through *The Electric Horseman.* The former was a vehicle for John Travolta, intended to be his next *Saturday Night Fever.* But the film, comparatively, fizzled and the soundtrack, which recycled the old country/rock hybrid, was hardly a breakthrough. A showcase for Willie Nelson's talents as a screen performer, *Honeysuckle Rose* was a road picture slightly adjusted to the contours of a country song. Following *Coalminer's Daughter,* the film confirmed a C&W ethos can now carry a Hollywood feature on the neo-Capraesque color and strength of its characters rather than on any new popularity of the music itself.

If there were any doubt about this, Dolly Parton's slight skills as an actress proved no hindrance to her success handling ensemble duties with Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda in *Nine to Five.* Parton's secretary required only that she tone down her flamboyant dress a bit and sashay through the office like a good ole girl gone upscale. The title song from the film assured Parton's new career as a crossover pop singer with a smash hit and an Academy Award nomination.

The latter-day cowboy on the run from Las Vegas with a $14 million thoroughbred, Robert Redford in *The Electric Horseman* trots along to Willie Nelson, some country instrumentals and lots of straight movie music. The movie's hybrid score is a further sign that country, when modified, has now arrived as adaptable for Hollywood soundtracks, finally breaking out of the funny music role it plays in Burt Reynolds' rural car chase pictures.

Rock, however, has backslided from its recent glory days on the screen and in 81 was mostly relegated to credit sequences. A few directors have continued to deploy the music as a substitute for conventional orchestra scores, but these are increasingly rare. One important innovator in this regard is Giorgio Moroder, the disco producer associated with Donna Summer. Starting with his music for *Midnight Express,* Moroder has forged a post-disco synthesizer rock and the results paid off in the 1979-80 season with *American Gigolo.* Blondie's credit sequence song, "Call Me," was a hit and overall, Moroder's music was likely the key factor in *Gigolo*'s burying the film's main competitor, William Friedkin's *Cruisin'* which had a misconceived Punk track. Ironically, it was Friedkin who had first anticipated Moroder's

recipe with his *Sorcerer* by using Tangerine Dream, the German synthesizer band, for the score.

Tangerine Dream was back this year with their metallic throb gracing *Thief,* a grim *film noir* starring James Caan as a super-sophisticated safe-cracker. The musical point of *Thief*'s score is that Tangerine Dream's ominous sound severs the film images from any actual world. Generally quite naturalistic, *Thief* closes in on the nightmare metaphysics of a *Taxi Driver* once the music starts. What is fascinating about this use of rock (as well as about trends in the commercial video shorts that turn up on TV) is that strong rock does seem to cut film off from its source, to abstract it and diffuse it. Rock transforms the image into a mere illustration of the music.

This was certainly true of those primal rock-laced movies like *Scorpio Rising, Easy Rider* and *Mean Streets* and *Performance.* Directly derived from Kenneth Anger's movies, like *Scorpio Rising,* Led Zepellin's *The Song Remains the Same,* particularly the Jimmy Page and Robert Plant dream sequences, owe much to Fantasy literature and illustration. Surfacing this year, Anger's new film, *Lucifer Rising,* starring the pre-*Broken English* Marianne Faithful, is a wordless ritual film with minimalist score by Page. But the stronger indicators of this illustration side of rock are the animated films, *American Pop* and *Heavy Metal.*

The problems with *American Pop* begin with director Ralph Bakshi's burgeoning sanctimony but his technique of using live-action footage as the basis for his animation has increased his tendency to deaden his films. In contrast to his best work, the series of films begun with *Fritz the Cat,* which combined a free visual imagination with a raunchy realism, *American Pop* is a failed reproduction of pop music history and, despite some bravura, too sentimental. Worst of all, Bakshi has lost his sense of sexual play. Animation allows music to be aroused into play—and rock flares the images out into fantasy, even in a Disney cartoon. Bakshi defeats this possibility with his history of pop, preferring straight social representation rather than a synoptic evocation of eras and personalities.

Heavy Metal, fortunately, moves in just the opposite direction. An omnibus film assembled by Ivan Reitman, and employing almost all the animators in Canada, *Heavy Metal* derives its name from the magazine, which specializes in fantasy and science fiction comix, and takes its visual style from the hard rock album cover. Almost an exploitation film—several of the fantasies run to heavy leather as well as metal—*Heavy Metal* rises finally to a marriage of advanced animation and "progressive" rock and represents the most fruitful direction rock feature filmmaking took in 1981.

In the hopes of surveying what to some appears to be a growing avant garde rock cinema, the Toronto Film Festival mounted a New Wave film program. *Times Square,* a post-Punk rip-off showbiz saga, had already bombed but insiders expected great things of *D.O.A., The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle, Rude Boy* and *Breaking Glass* and Deborah Harry's debut in *Union City* was eagerly awaited. Later in the season, *Radio On, The Decline of Western Civilization* and *Christiane F: The Children From the Zoo* also made appearances. These films share little in common besides a certain irreverence, a static game of playacting and a backhanded pretense of seriousness. Only *Rude Boy* actually succeeds.

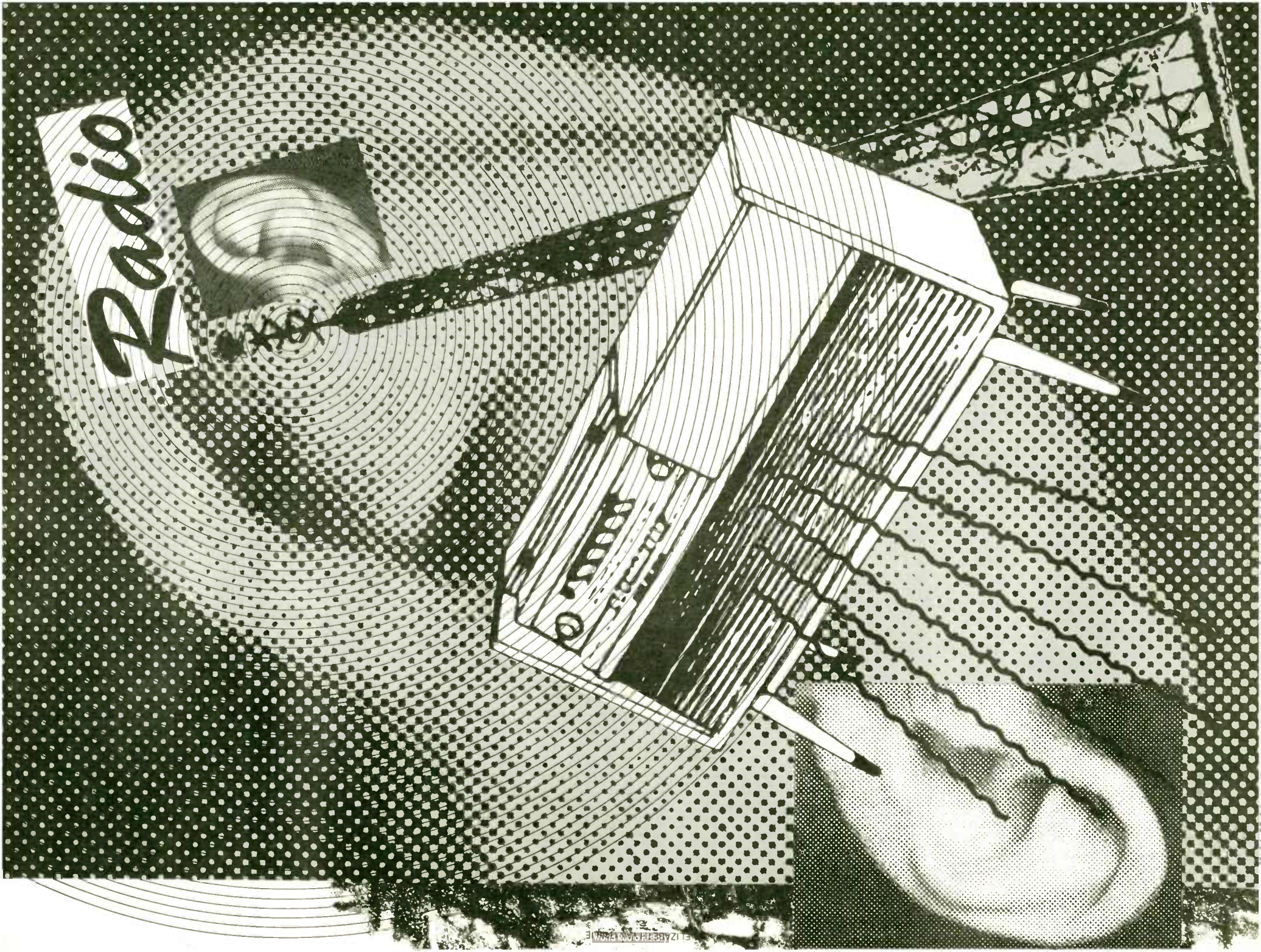
D.O.A. and *Rock'n'Roll Swindle* are twin films about the Sex Pistols. The former is a documentary of the American tour, the latter a collection of bits and pieces the bank worked on intermittently and later assembled by their manager, Malcom McLaren. *D.O.A.* is a conventional rock documentary with an uncharacteristic theme—a band running their reputation into the ground. The tour was a whirlwind, the film treats it as a juggernaut. A bit thick with a patina of doom, *D.O.A.* serves well only as an archival record of the Pistols, a band that will likely continue to mystify us more in the future than they do now.

The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle, by director John Temple, is a nickle and dime *The Kids Are All Right,* an assemblage of shticks, sidesteps and bullshit the group would probably have abandoned (including outtakes from their aborted Russ Meyer epic *Who Killed Bambi?*) but which has been thrust in our path regardless. We really don't need to know that the Pistols had a guttered sense of theater and a sensibility drenched in sarcasm. We knew. Now we know they had no affinity for film through which to express these qualities.

Breaking Glass and *Cha Cha* are attempts to cash in on New Wave. In *Breaking Glass,* a melodrama, Hazel O'Connor rises from Punk to Glitz and betrays her Irish streetsmart soul. The film is a light reflection of the German New Wave style. *Cha Cha,* a Dutch film starring Lene Lovitch, Nina Hagen and Herman Brood, is a new wave musical and in between numbers everyone passes the time waiting around and deciding just what to do next. A variation on the new European "youth movie," the movie is amiable and boring. Nina Hagen could have been an intriguing Andy Warhol "superstar" twenty years ago, but as a diva of the New Wave she is a bit bulky and immobile.

The Decline of Western Civilization is an L.A. Punk film and, in addition to the rather retarded qualities of that scene, suffers from an indifferent complicity of non-Punks (who are incapable of filmmaking themselves) of *cinema verite* visitors. Superficially empathetic, *Decline* is Diane Arbus with sound and this movie could just as well have been made with a Nikon and a taperecorder.

Union City and *Radio On,* two independent narrative films, are straight fiction with a connection, though distance, with the New Wave. *Union City* stars Deborah Harry as a dishrag married to a man obsessed with a thief who preys on their milk bottles. The place is New Jersey, the time somewhere between 1957 and 1961. The results are drecky and dull sub-De Palma, although Harry makes a good dishrag, a type difficult to cast. *Radio On* is a profoundly weary British road film. Intended as an evocation of troubled contemporary England, the traveller wanders (with his radio on) in search of a lost brother. It is hard to say whether this film is a good independent's try or an aspiring young Godard's failure.


Radio

Radio

BY MIKE HARRISON

IN ALL THE YEARS I've been an avid observer of commercial music-oriented radio and its delicate relationship with contemporary culture, this past one contained the most change so far. Radio is in the throes of rapidly accelerating evolution with both growth and change occurring in a variety of different directions and overlapping patterns. And an even greater amount of change looms imminent as what's happening clearly appears to be but the first small steps in an impending cultural and technological revolution.

At this point, it's worth mentioning that the music community's continuing view of radio as a tight-assed obstacle, holding back every aspiring musician from success and every record released from being a hit, is understandable considering the tremendous power the medium has had over music these past 3½ decades in its position as primary "gatekeeper" between players and listeners. But a closer, more objective look at radio reveals that it has also undergone a complex evolution along with the music, in many ways enhancing the scene's well-being and, for many years, fostering its remarkable growth. (Here's to all those unsung radio heroes who've gone down to defeat in their field trying to proselytize records and genres of music they "believed" in!)

Now with the aforementioned changes at hand, the seemingly indestructible bonds between radio and the music community are becoming frayed as the record industry already is exploring and exploiting new avenues of artist and product exposure.

Technological change and its controversial implications have broadcasters dizzy with anticipation and anxiety. The buzzword at radio conventions this past year was "satellites" as radio people try to analyze their impact upon the space and time mechanics of the medium. Of course, it's still early and no one has yet come up with the archetypal content to appropriately fit a multitude of new space age forms. But the rush is on as programmers talk about such diverse innovations as "great national radio stations in the sky" or the more utilitarian use of satellites as a quick and efficient means of distributing program materials replacing tape, records and the good ol' U.S. Postal Service.

Of course, technological innovation is not exclusive to the field of radio and the medium's practitioners have become rightly paranoid in the face of severe competition from the outside. Videodisk (not to mention the entire video revolution), cable audio services (a minor adjunct to an already "wired" America) etc. threaten to undermine radio's position and role within society. It may not be long before record companies have access to their own audio cable channels virtually eliminating radio's hitherto dominant position in the exposure of pop music. It's no wonder that a large number of radio stations across the nation have already begun affiliating themselves with local cable operations for video simulcasts and even trimulcasts. But, again, exactly what will come of this marriage remains to be seen. After all, when you put a screen on radio, it becomes television. Radio could've been broadcasting the audio to *I Love Lucy* a quarter century ago. No big deal.

This past year has been good to syndication which continues to enjoy a tremendous boom that began in the late-seventies. Numerous new independent syndication firms have popped up with the major chains and groups (ABC, CBS, NBC, RKO, etc.) following suit by launching their own special programming (news and music) networks. As a result of this activity, the field is virtually flooded with a variety of nationally-distributed music-oriented specials, documentaries, histories, features, live concerts, countdowns, interviews and series. So quickly has this scene proliferated during the past year that *Billboard* Magazine has had to launch a new feature listing national music specials each week. Although initially slow to pick up on this trend, record company promotion departments and public relations firms have discovered syndication's value as a new avenue of exposure for their artists and music and have made major moves this year to cultivate their ties with the field.

During this past year, we've also seen tremendous changes in radio formats—in the actual ones that exist and the balance of strength between them. Old-line top 40 radio, once the supposed pinnacle of "mass appeal" tastes (the "McDonald's" of audio entertainment. . . . remember the infamous 17 record playlist?) has evolved into a whole spectrum of modified formats. Fractionalization of musical genre by demographic (age

and sex) and psychographic (lifestyle) categorization has resulted in a multitude of "top 40's." (Even McDonald's has had to expand their menu this past year.)

This was the year that west coast top 40 legend KHJ, Los Angeles finally abandoned the once mighty "boss radio" format in favor of their new country music approach (jokingly referred to in radio circles as "hoss radio"). In New York, former-monster WABC had to radically modify their long venerable "musicradio" format, even adding Yankee baseball to their programming line-up.

What was once "underground" has come full circle to the overground as AOR (album oriented rock) radio has taken over where top 40 left off as the highest rated of the hot music carriers. But now AOR stands threatened by the rise of the new adult contemporaries (once known as "MOR"—middle of the road) which are being positioned to cater to the maturing tastes of the rapidly aging post war baby boom demographic tidal wave that has dominated the flow of pop culture since the Howdy Doody days and shows no sign of relinquishing that influence in the foreseeable future. With change comes incredible reversals of attitude and policy . . . sometimes out of frustation, sometimes out of necessity. For example, inside sources at New York's WNEW-FM, once the bastion of taste and the vanguard of musical trends, revealed that the station has resorted to call-out research in an effort to gain a firmer grasp of what to play and close the widening ratings gap between them and their closest competitor, WPLJ (long regarded by the music industry as one of radio's toughest nuts to crack). WNEW-FM's dabbling in this practice represents a remarkable shift in posture. Perhaps the demise of legendary sister progressive KSAN in San Francisco, whose historic format was abandoned this past year in favor of country music, sent a chill wind across the nation which was felt in New York.

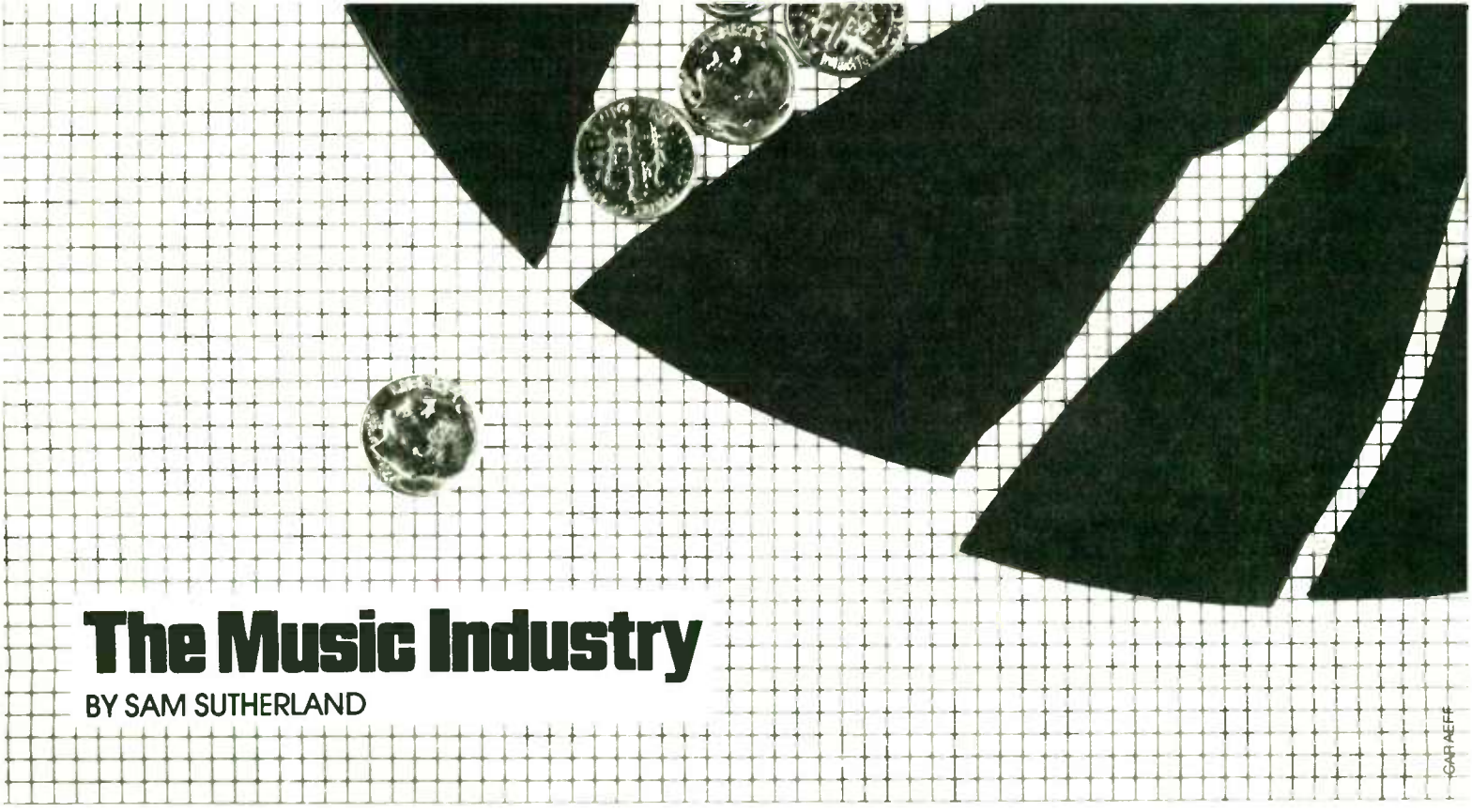
This is not to imply that everybody's going country. Country is but one of a wide array of lifestyle formats to emerge as part of the widening mainstream superfractionalization process taking place on the radio dial. Stations are specializing more than ever (although at this point, in just about every market, there are stations trying to buck this trend and be multi-purpose . . . but the jury is still out on these attempts). The lines of demarcation separating country, hard rock 'n' roll, soft rock, pop, disco, urban, r&b, jazz, adult contemporary and new wave from each other are not just based upon obvious generic differences but by the extremely subjective accompanying factor of artist image. This makes the musician extremely vulnerable to being categorically pigeonholed, which is artistically stifling. But, on the other hand, it also opens up a greater number of alternative avenues of musical expression which formerly would never have received a shot at exposure on the so-called "mass-appeal" dominated airwaves.

This had also been the year of the consultant explosion in radio. It is becoming commonplace for programmers from a variety of formats, upon achieving ratings success at their stations, to immediately hang out a shingle offering their services to other stations across the country who would like similar (and quick) success stories in their markets. And there are lots of clients ready to sign up as it is almost becoming as much a part of the status quo for radio stations to have an outside programming consulting firm as it is to have a national sales rep.

Since these consultants wield a lot more control at their client stations than just the advisory capacity that the term "consultant" indicates, we have, in fact, entered the day of the national independent program director. (Yes, the record company promo departments are in the process of taking them out to dinner and getting their home phone numbers.)

And finally, no overview of radio's changes this past year would be complete without mentioning the historic "deregulation" of radio by the Federal Communications Commission. This compex move, among many things, loosens the binds by which the goverment saw to it that radio balanced its music programming with a significant percentage of community-serving talk (news, public affairs, etc.). Does this mean the birth of absolutely "all music" radio? Perhaps. But, even though the path has been legally cleared for stations to up the music and downplay the talk, many programmers are interpreting the current slide in record sales as indication of a general downturn in the overall popularity of music and are "beefing up" their formats with increased talk, despite deregulation, in hopes of increasing their ratings.

The '80s are off and running at a sprint. I believe as time goes by and the dust begins to settle, this past year will be viewed as a pivotal period between two distinctly different eras of music-oriented radio programming. The coming era, though inevitable, contains a number of alternative futures, the exact details of which remain to be seen.



The Music Industry

BY SAM SUTHERLAND

THE GLORY DAYS ARE OVER.

That's the message delivered forcefully to the music industry during 1979, translated into a siege mentality that persisted through much of 1980, and now integrated into the business' day to day strategies in 1981. Platinum bonanzas can still happen—just ask Barbra Streisand, Kenny Rogers, REO Speedwagon or any of several other big winners on the charts and at the cash register—but the reckless confidence of the '70s has been tempered by a sadder but wiser recognition of the market's limits. More subtly, popular music's '60s and '70s image as the most socially influential, politically barometric mass art form has been tarnished both by the paucity of success stories combining provocative content with wide commercial acceptance, and by the public's evident reinvolvement in other media such as movies and television.

In those respects, the past year has been anticlimactic, bringing neither the cataclysm feared by the trade's alarmists nor the overnight recovery predicted by its boosters. By the industry's most familiar internal benchmark, the yearly sales report issued each spring by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), 1980 witnessed a marginal recovery in gross sales, up from $3.676 billion in '79 to $3.683 billion in records and tapes shipped to dealers last year. And that figure is arguably closer to the actual net sales to consumers than in past years, owing to the more conservative shipping stance taken by labels and distributors in the wake of the returns logjam of late '78 and '79, when overshipments of product unleashed a vicious cycle of retailer and distribution bankruptcies, label closings and consolidations, staff cutbacks and artist roster slashes.

More telling than that dollar figure, however, is the RIAA's admission that the total number of purchases dipped by about 5%, implying a stasis to the market that overturns the nowhere-to-go-but-up brio common during the last decade. Other indicators also point up the strained profitability of the music trade: the nation's recording studios struggled with emptier schedules, forcing frozen or even reduced session rates or under-the-table deals with clients, a trend reflected in the AF of M's estimate of session fees as falling by about 12%; dealers reported lower inventory levels and chafed at the labels' tougher new credit policies, enacted during 1979; major concert and arena tours were fewer in number and grappled with spiralling production costs as well as an apparent diminution in the size of the prime ticket-buying teen and younger adult audience; and cutbacks, closings, and roster trims recurred, albeit less devastatingly.

Those problems hardly spell disaster, given the general performance for most consumer goods and services amid the recessive economy of the past few years. What makes these signs of shrinkage demoralizing to the moguls and merchants who survived the slump of '79 is the inflated future painted on the very eve of that slump by *Saturday Night Fever* and *Grease,* which shattered sales records to imply that commercial music would continue its '60s and '70s market expansion with redoubled momentum.

Instead, time has caught up with the world of gold and platinum. Several basic trends beyond its own borders have frustrated this once-common scenario of growth—that general softness of the economy, the incursion of other rival media propelled by new technology, and a cultural fragmentation visible here as it is in other communications and entertainment sectors.

With money tight, the nation's consumers are proving more discerning in their purchases than they

seemed a few short years ago, as well as more critical of the products they're offered. And as cable and pay TV have mushroomed in popularity, the motion picture industry has rebounded from its own slump to a banner summer at the box office, and new diversions from personal computers to Space Invaders have popped up to compete for disposable income, the music industry has painfully re-learned that it's not the only game in town.

Less obviously but perhaps more crucially, the baby boom that created music's fertile youth market during the past two decades has evolved into an adult population much tougher to capture. Much as magazine and book publishers have been forced to cater to an ever widening spectrum of special needs and interests for their profits, and as the television industry has recognized in its own preoccupations with the demand for "narrowcast" alternatives like pay and cable, the music industry is beginning to grapple with the divergence in public tastes.

Attempts at rekindling a single least common denominator solution to bottom line problems have thus far failed to uncover a lucrative new alternative to rock, pop, country or soul. Country's much-touted new clout may be reflected by a broader market share, estimated at around 20% of records and tapes sold by most sources, but it hasn't yet attained the sheer volume turned by pop and rock best-sellers. Ambitious tie-ins between major motion pictures and calculated contemporary music soundtrack packages were dominant during the spring, summer and fall of '80, but their inability to mine a new *Fever* or *Grease* equally potent at box office and record store has since cooled rather than heightened the interplay between studios and labels.

Digital audio, generally accepted as a potentially revitalizing technological force, remains several years away at best, and tight money is braking the rate at which studios tool up for professional digital recording, the necessary first step in the transition to digital. That's mirrored in the decision made by most suppliers of professional digital recorders to continue pursuing rentals of the system, rather than try selling them to the studios.

Even the interim consumer products aimed at bridging the gap between the venerable analog disc and the true home digital disc or cassette face murky futures. Although its market has at least doubled in the past year, the audiophile industry appears restricted to a minority constituency by its higher prices. And CBS' new CX "companion" process, a noise reduction system for discs that promises both better sounding records (for the cost of a home decoder, ranging from $50 to $100) and compatibility for normal stereos, has encountered bitter resistance from the nation's mastering engineers and studio operators. CX may already have a formidable potential in terms of label share of market, given both CBS' own size and that of Warner Communications, which has agreed to release discs in CX, but selling artists, managers and producers on the system is another story.

Finally, video has yet to reveal itself as either savior or enemy, despite the breathless rhetoric of the past five years. Cable TV has offered alternative exposure for new artists, but opened Pandora's Box as well in its effect on label budgets now straining to accomodate promotional video clip production. That medium's first experiment in mating continuous music programming with stereo sound and color imagery, Warner/Amex's "Music TeleVision" (MTV), launched this August, did show promise in its initial openness to unknown and even unsigned bands, although restricted to a rock-music format.

As for videocassettes and videodiscs, the lag in funding for original production in those configurations makes their eventual impact on musical careers an open question. Video may kill the radio star, or bring him or her into wider prominence—but don't expect the major corporations investing in home video to resolve the issue quickly.

The individual destines of major labels and their executives, as well as other shifts in existing media, are easier to trace, however. Some highlights follow.

On The Radio: Softening Up

Because major labels continue to rely on radio exposure as their single most important avenue in breaking records, broadcasters remain undiminished in their influence over what artists and styles are being bankrolled, despite recurrent talk among record company executives of breaking this stranglehold through alternative exposure.

And in 1981, that fact is reflected in the continued softening of music as fostered by both sectors. With most major radio markets saturated by rock formats, the past year has continued the late '70s erosion of rock as stations defected to adult/contemporary and country formats. Both have helped revitalize some AM stations previously unable to compete in the rock arena with FM.

As for album-oriented rock, what was once deemed progressive continued its regression into rigidly formulaic programming warier than ever of truly daring artists and sub-genres. A de facto color wall keeping black stylists off rock FM playlists continued to rise ever higher, in apparent indifference to signs that the musical community was exploring vital syntheses of funk, jazz and new wave.

Even black progressive FM formats, which ignored that color line to its creative and commercial advantage during the late '70s, as exemplified by the success of WKTU-FM and WBLS-FM in New York, showed signs of reversing its stance. Frustrated black radio professionals and some black producers and artists began chiding more open-minded programmers for allowing Whitey on the airwaves when Whitey continued nixing blacks on rock radio; sadder yet, r&b and contemporary blues interests complained of black radio's resistance to records "too black" to capture large audiences.

Ironically, adult/contemporary proved more flexible than either of those formats, at least with respect to the color issue. But its general dictate for less aggressive music inspired a renewed interest in genuine MOR fare, and by midsummer at least one record (Roger Voudouris' single debut for Neil Bogart's Boardwalk label) had been released in both a regular rock mix and in a more saccharine, string-laden version aimed at the nation's housewives.

As for jazz, classical and true free-form formats, already confined for the most part to non-profit outlets, the deregulatory mood in Washington was being interpreted as a future inhibitor. Although both radio and label market research mentioned jazz as one genre likely to benefit from the nation's transition into a predominantly adult marketplace, the erosion of true jazz formats continued.

At Retail: Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed . . .

The trade's chronic undercapitalization, revealed so graphically by the retail and distribution bankruptcies that made headlines during 1979, was still visible in major new shutdowns including bankruptcy for Peaches and the closing of Korvette's extensive chain of record departments.

Those chains still in business, however, showed some recovery in profits, and in the spring of '81 a *Billboard* survey projected modest expansion via new store openings, estimated at about 10% for the year. Retailers were leaner in their operations, reducing their inventories and ordering new records and tapes more cautiously than in the past.

One label trend greeted enthusiastically by stores was the spread of lower-priced "midline" album catalogs, introduced in late '79 and early '80 to combat the plummeting sales volume for older titles once routinely upped in list price along with the latest hits—and then sold at higher shelf prices, lacking the incentive programs once lavishly bestowed on new hit contenders.

Midlines thus took up increasing store space, and by mid-'81 figured prominently on both retailer and label balance sheets to partially offset the fewer multiple platinum warhorses. To retailers, the $5.98 list LP offered a chance to revive the multiple sale, a commonplace event taken for granted during the boom years but feared endangered.

Cutouts and imports also continued to make incremental gains, and audiophile LPs continued to spread into the retail mainstream. And blank tape, still dreaded by label strategists as an index to home taping (and displaced LP sales), remained a strong profitmaker for retailers.

As for price, chains didn't have to accomodate a trade-wide swing to $9.98 list albums, but smaller jumps in wholesale cost did begin edging up shelf prices by spring.

Record Companies

The prior decade's predictions that independently distributed labels would be swallowed whole by the major branch networks were undermined by commercial hot streaks for the remaining mass market indies, Chrysalis, Motown and Arista. Their clout emboldened a smaller but tougher field of surviving indie distributors to claim a new commitment to creating their own "branch" clout through closer ties—and to invest their own money in new label ventures like the MOR-slanted Applause label, unveiled by veterans Artie Mogull and Jerry Rubinstein early in '81.

Smaller indies also showed some upbeat signs, despite their continued problems in securing payment and sustaining an even flow of saleable titles. Larger specialty labels, notably Rounder, displayed increasing sophistication in their marketing; both these companies and smaller communal lines like Windham Hill also kept pace or even outran the corporate giants in packaging design and pressing quality.

As for the big leagues, RCA enjoyed a chart comeback during the first quarters of 1981, buttressed further by a run of strong sellers for distribution partner A&M. MCA Records likewise continued its gradual reconstruction as a commercial company, posting improved financial performances during the latter half of '80 and the first half of '81 despite the loss of major acts like Elton John and Steely Dan.

Meanwhile PolyGram's reformation continued apace, its three label structure consolidated during 1980 into a single company distributing all three trademarks and their affiliates.

If consolidation was the key phrase at PolyGram and a streamlined MCA, other majors increasingly turned to trade veterans to set up compact custom labels. David Geffen's new joint venture label with Warner Bros. bowed in the fall of '80 with less of a bang than expected, since Donna Summer's rock-powered *The Wanderer* encountered resistance from radio programmers and record and tape fans, but the next Geffen release, John Lennon and Yoko Ono's *Double Fantasy,* became the comeback of the year—and prelude to tragedy.

Other Geffen signings, including Elton John, Peter Gabriel and John Hiatt, made his the most competitive of the new labels, but other '60s and '70s execs also popped up with new companies, among them former Atlantic president Jerry Greenberg's Mirage and producer Quincy Jones' Qwest, both WEA-distributed ventures.

Meanwhile CBS captured Neil Bogart's new Boardwalk label via its new "p&d" (pressing and distribution) arrangement, only to lose the young company domestically to independent distribution when Bogart found himself disappointed in the initial response to his records. CBS continued pursuing new p&d deals, however, and in midsummer scored a coup in grabbing WEA stalwart Geffen for overseas distribution.

Internally, most majors avoided the wholesale budget and staff cutbacks seen in '79 but continued to operate on a leaner complement of both employees and marketing dollars. With bottom line profitability more fragile than before, label a&r executives conceded that long-term commitment to artists was now undercut by the need for a more rapid crossover into black ink; that trend meant shorter contractual associations to majors for many developing acts, as well as the continued resurgence in singles deals to test the commercial waters before bankrolling entire LPs.

That conservatism may spell diminishing horizons for young acts intent upon inking a major label contract. But another late '70s trend, the rise in regional and artist-owned indie labels spurred by new wave as well as dance music, saw at least one possibly influential success story in Miles Copeland's I.R.S. experiment via A&M.

THE YEAR IN RECORD COLLECTING

BY ANDY DOHERTY

THIS YEAR I SAW a record sold for three hundred and fifty dollars. American money, cash. The record, an independently-produced album, was the only effort by teenagers from Philips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. The LP was cut during the mid-1960s. Probably less than a thousand copies of it were printed. In its day it was barely circulated beyond the borders of Massachusetts. Yet in time collectors came to view the Rising Storm's offering as a prime relic of the genre known as *Prep-Rick Americanus,* and a scholar valued it to a mighty tune.

1981 was a very good year for people who deal in rare records.

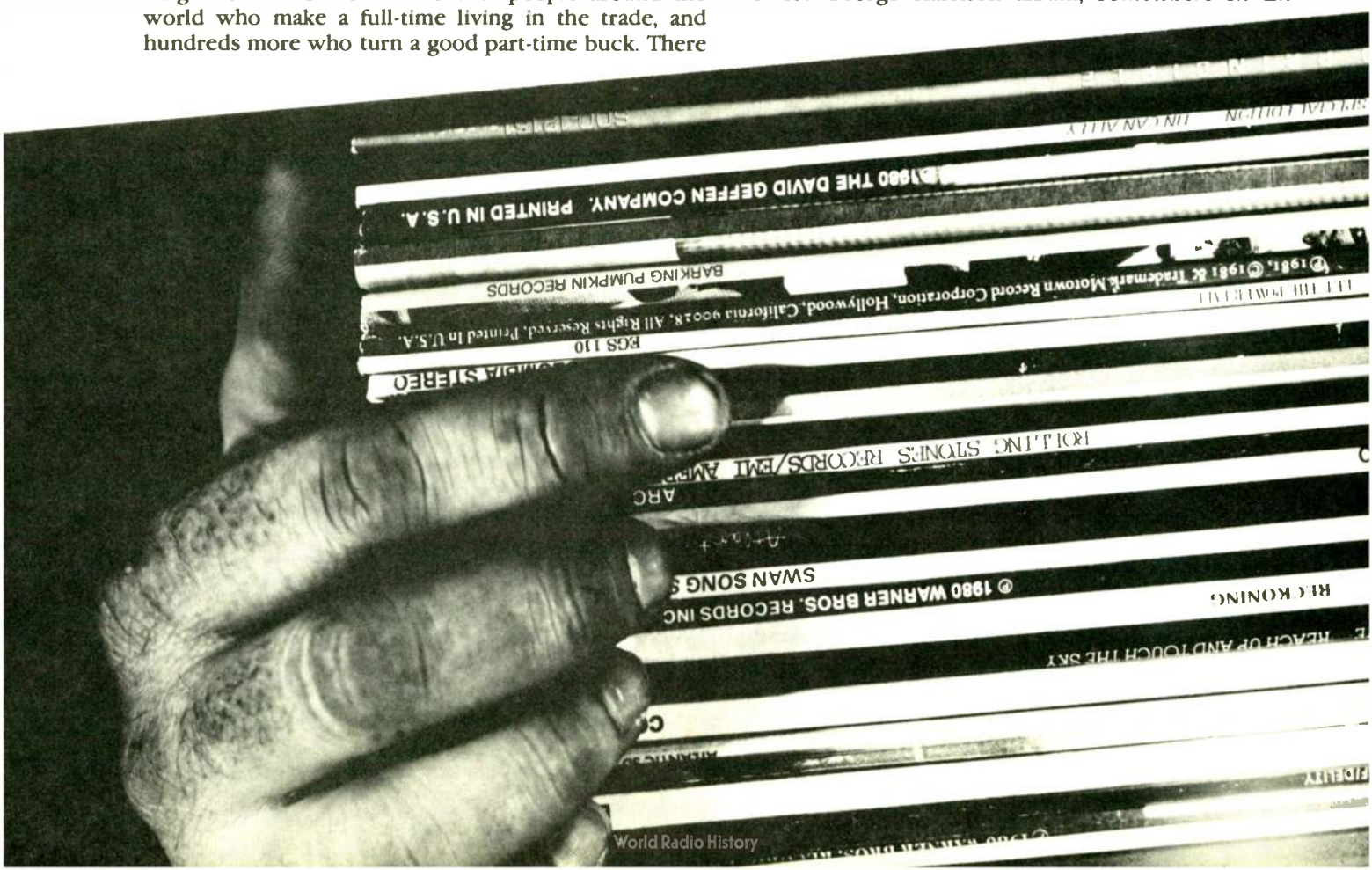
A word of caution, however, before you drop whatever business you have now and plunge into the rare record race, dedicating your life to yard sales and warehouses. Be warned: fortunes are not eager to be made. It's true that every old record has a cash value, but, as often as not, it can be calculated in pennies, not dollars. If you seek a sure source of income, collect deposit bottles from the roadside, where the average is better. Rare records are not an easy trade.

But: the Rising Storm. Obviously, money can be made from old records if you have knowledge, foresight, and diligence. There are hundreds of people around the world who make a full-time living in the trade, and hundreds more who turn a good part-time buck. There really are lots of valuable records out there that can put the proverbial buck on the table.

There are but two basic kinds of records. First are the albums you cannot buy readily at the neighborhood full-service shop. Records, in short, that will never show up on the *Billboard* Top Hundred because no one—except dealers in rare records—expects to turn a profit on them. The bulk of these records are pressed for promotional purposes and distributed free of charge to influential persons in the various media.

Usually these records will contain interview material or—more commonly—live versions of songs culled from whatever album is being pushed at the time. Current examples of this phenomenon include a Pete Townshend conversational and in-concert tracks by REO Speedwagon, Ry Cooder, and Gary U.S. Bonds. Older examples include a Nils Lofgren live album and a Todd Rundgren interview. The value of items such as these—invariably pressed in limited quantities—should be immediately obvious.

Not as obvious, however, is the value of promotional items that contain not a note that cannot be had elsewhere, but are pressed in unusual configurations. For instance, there is a 12″ single culled from the newest George Harrison album, *Somewhere In En-*



gland, and there is a sampler that has been assembled from Brian Eno's various albums. In neither case is an iota of new music or conversation offered. Yet these are records of some value: both Harrison and Eno have that certain ineffable something that makes them collectible. Certain performers inspire blind devotion. Fans of these artists (the Beatles, Eno, Hendrix, Bowie, to name but a few) need to have everything their heroes have done.

Taking this rabid fan appeal one step further, consider the matter of white-label promos. Now this is really rarified territory, but pay attention. Most records, understand, do not have white labels. Again, the white labels are restricted to copies circulated to the media. Naturally enough, there are limited numbers of white-label promos. So, snob appeal being what it is, value accrues—especially for those artists who have that aforementioned ineffable something.

Are you still with me? Good, because that was the easy part.

Here's the hard part: out-of-print records. By definition, out-of-print records are records you can't buy on the corner today but could buy on the corner once upon a time. There are more out-of-print records than there are any other kind because records are like icebergs: what's available today on the surface is but a small percentage of what's been offered over the years and has now vanished beneath the waves. Understandably, out-of-print records are the most profitable area of record dealing. If the Rising Storm album were readily available, it probably couldn't fetch the price of a broken Coke bottle.

It would be impossible in this abbreviated space to list even a fraction of the desirable out-of-print records to be found today. Nonetheless, let's take a quick stroll down Memory Lane and stop at two landmarks that show up more often than rare records by rights should. The Mothers of Invention albums (on Verve) and the Nazz albums (on SRC) are items most neophyte dealers can turn up without more than a few days of backbreaking effort. Sizable quantities of these titles were printed, but America destroys its culture quickly and, as a result, these titles qualify as somewhat rare today. Moreover, there is continued interest in these artists (not an across-the-boards situation for '60s stars), which means the dealer can move them rapidly. In short, these are good building blocks for a new business.

Extrapolate for yourself from here about out-of-print albums. If Mothers of Invention records—which were probably printed to the tune of a half-million copies per title—can attract serious money, it serves to reason that jazz, soul, country, and reggae records (which were pitched for narrower markets than rock 'n' roll) will be even more difficult to locate. And hence, more valuable. Try to find a copy of Miles Davis' *Jazz Track,* or the classic James Brown albums on King, or Prince Buster's randy best, or—to name a personal desire—Jerry Lee Lewis' *Soul My Way.* These records just aren't around anymore, though the demand for them still exists, and a

dealer will exploit the demand as far as possible.

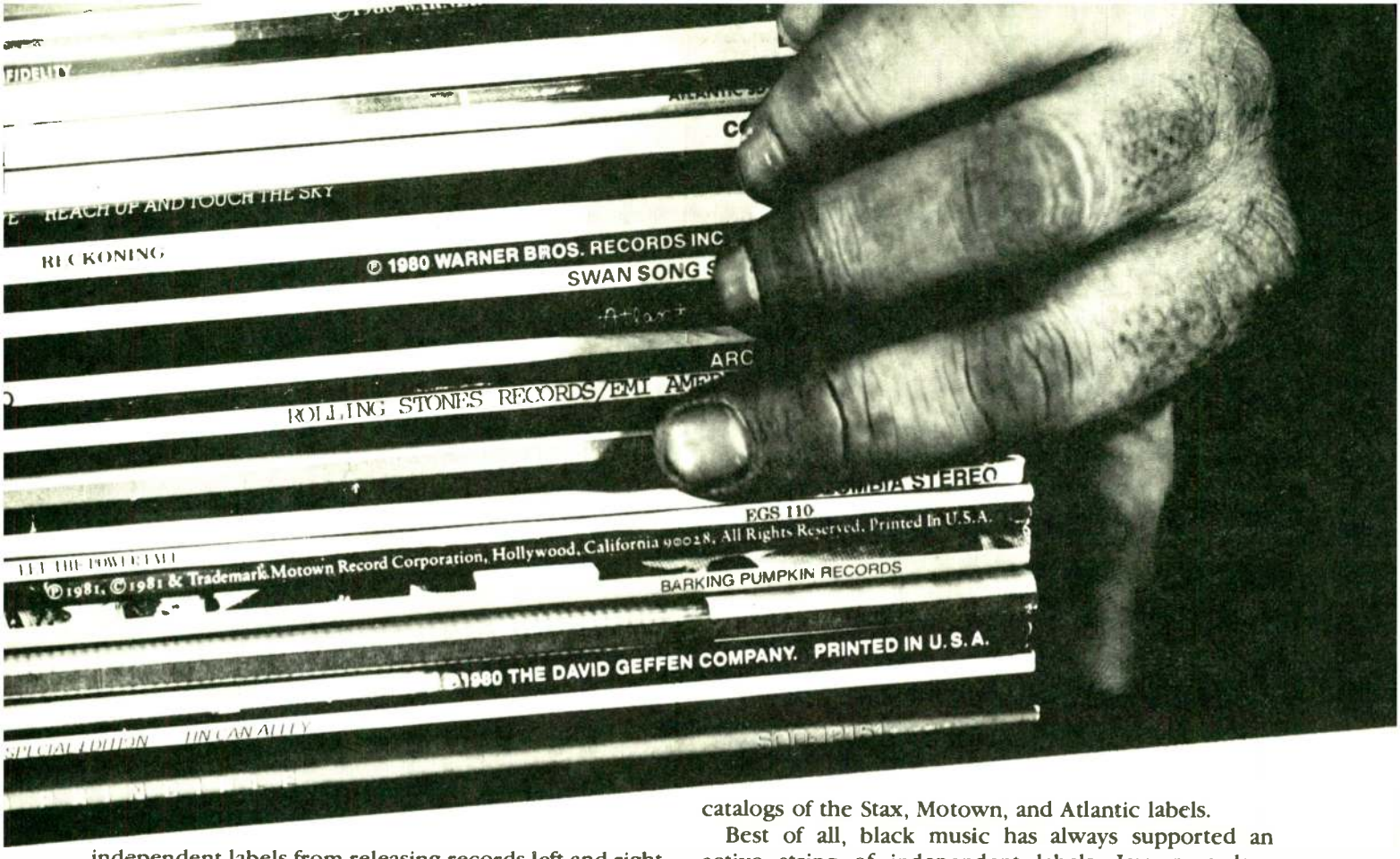
But the market will fluctuate. We live today in the midst of bootleg and reissue fever. A number of labels—the bulk of them overseas, where the interest in older music is more pronounced—have taken to reprinting classic sounds. These new editions don't totally destroy the value of rare records but they do undercut them. Although a serious collector will always crave the original, a peripheral collector—especially the person who is after the music and not the package—is likely to go for the reissue every time. In other words, today you may have an album worth a hundred dollars. Tomorrow the same album may be worth twenty.

Now to the second basic kind of record. The definition is easy: records currently in-print and available to whomever wants to buy them at the neighborhood full-service shop. In time, these records will also go out-of-print, but, for the time being, here they are. All that remains for us is to separate the wheat from the chaff, to identify if we can the Rising Storms of tomorrow and stash them to our profit.

To do this, it's helpful to divide the in-print category in half: major labels and independent labels. Major labels are those manufactured by the giant labels (Columbia, Capitol, the WEA Family, etc.). As a general rule, the majors flood the market with their product, even the stiffs. This means that major label product will take longer to become rare than independent product will. But major labels can produce rarities, and here are a few tricks to spotting them before they disappear.

The non-LP B-side of a single materializes occasionally on major labels. A recent Bruce Springsteen single had one. This is important because singles have an on-shelf life of approximately four months, after which they vanish utterly. Then there is the sudden superstar who has had a previous life in the vineyards. The lead singer of Foreigner, Lou Gramm, to cite a prominent example, did two obscure albums with a group called Black Sheep. Finally, there are the real oddities: items removed from circulation prematurely or designed to have brief runs. The prominent illustration of the item designed to have a short-term run is the metal film canister which enclosed the initial print run of the second Public Image album. The prominent illustration of the item removed prematurely from circulation would be the original "in flames" Lynyrd Skynyrd *Street Survivors* cover, which was yanked after the group's tragic plane crash. A related incident, nowhere near as well known, involves an unfortunate Elektra group, Alien, whose album was run off as a promo but never released to the public, apparantly because of a conflict with the motion picture of the same name. So, as you see, major label product can get rare. On the average, though, the odds are longer and it usually takes a while.

Independent labels are another story. They can produce instantly rare records. The majors are often said to own today's record industry, but that didn't stop



independent labels from releasing records left and right during 1981. There are scads of independent records, and no more than one-percent of them have any kind of distribution and/or penetration into the marketplace. Which means there will be lots of independent records left languishing in someone's garage, forgotten by everyone except those people up the line of history who take an interest in such esoterica. The Rising Storm record, let us not forget, was manufactured by an independent label in the forsaken wilds of Massachusetts. Believe me, it's a good bet that anyone who has the money to pick up a copy of every independent label record he can find today will have an ultra-valuable item on his hands in fifteen years. He will also, truth, have a ton of dross, but that's the way these things happen. Hope you've got the space.

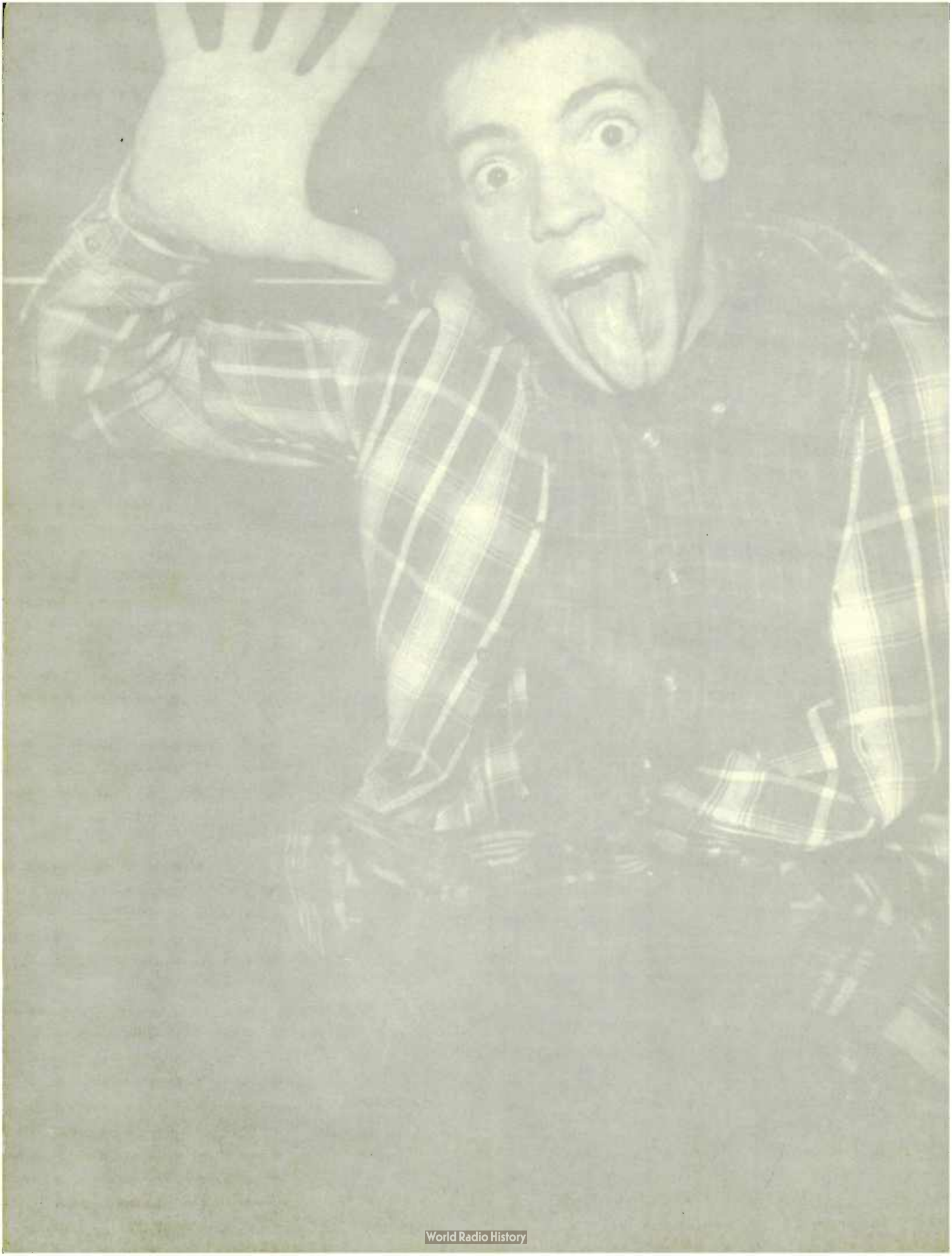
Myself? If I had a thousand dollars and ten years to wait on the investment, what would I spend my money on? Well, a key question has to be asked: am I going to spend my money on music I like, music I will listen to? Or am I going to go at it from strictly an investor's point of view and not give a damn one way or the other about the music? A key question, because, if the former, will I be able to part with records I treasure no matter what the price?

Personally, if I could bring myself to part with what I had accumulated, I would invest in black music in a combination of equal parts jazz, reggae, and funk. History proves that it takes most white people a minimum of ten years to catch up with the black music of the day, but once they catch up with it they become obsessed with it. Three hundred and fifty dollar records are rare in black music, but there are a lot of ten-to-fifty dollar price tags today on records from the 1960s catalogs of the Stax, Motown, and Atlantic labels.

Best of all, black music has always supported an active string of independent labels. Jazz records—especially those as extreme as Sun Ra's—materialize regularly on thousand-copy runs that never show up in cities a mere five hundred miles from the records' point-of-origin. Reggae records similarly lack wide distribution beyond the ethnic community, and have the added distinction of often having to be imported into this country. And funk—funk may be the best place of all to make money today because there are millions of unwanted disco records lying around, many of them waiting to be recognized as great efforts, and many of them cut on independent labels and extremely difficult to locate, as witness the Heaven and Earth album on G.E.C.

That's the trail I would take. It's conservative, and I would probably not turn up a Rising Storm album. But I would make money. Someone else would probably do it differently, and could certainly do it more profitably. But anyone who makes money in rare records will probably do it by adhering roughly to the rules I have laid out: keep track of promo-only material, know what's in print and what's not, recognize major label oddities, and try to follow what's happening with the independent labels.

All of which may not sound like much work, but I guarantee you won't be able to do it in a forty hour week. The successful people in the rare record business spend massive numbers of hours scrounging for stock and corresponding with sources before the selling even begins. It's a hard job and the rewards can sometimes seem slim. But then, you can't make a living picking up deposit bottles for a mere forty hours a week either. And when was the last time someone turned up a three hundred and fifty dollar deposit bottle?



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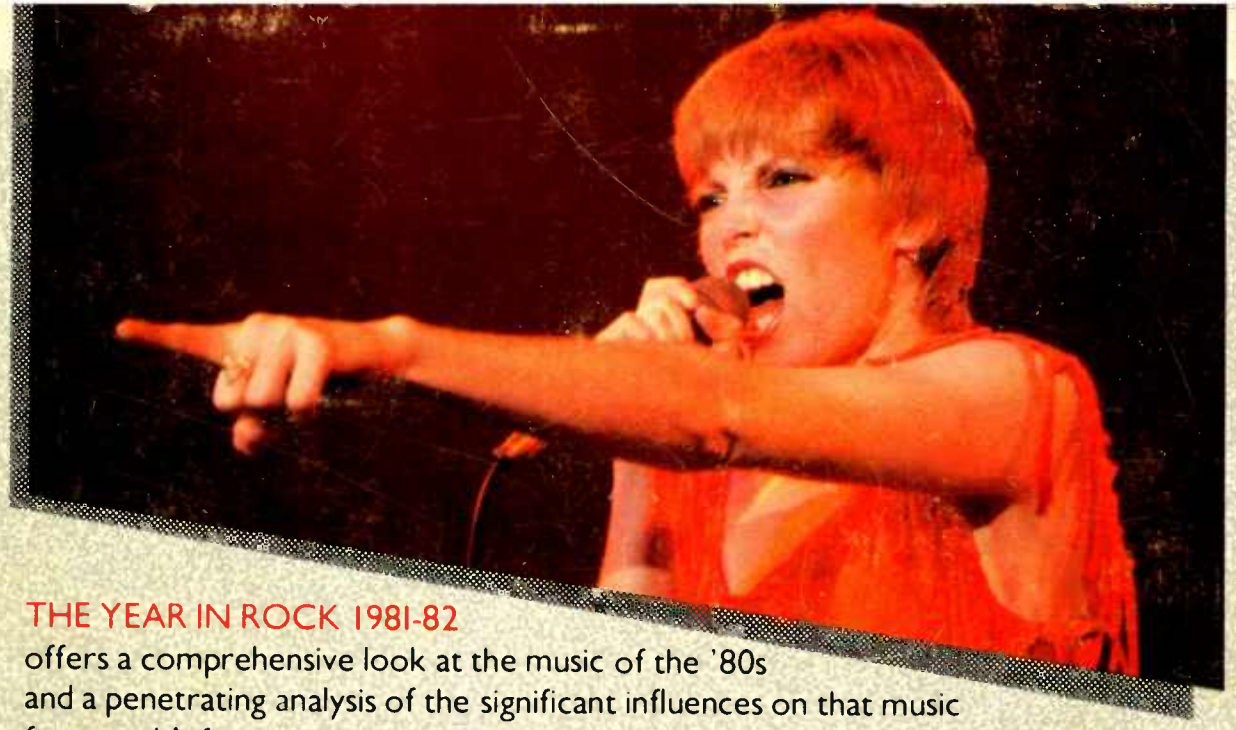

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