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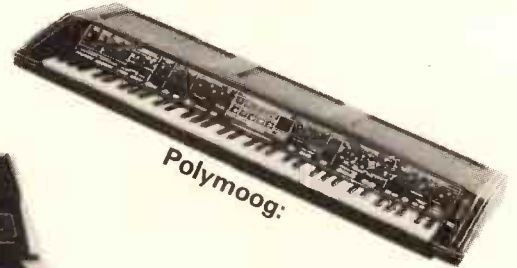
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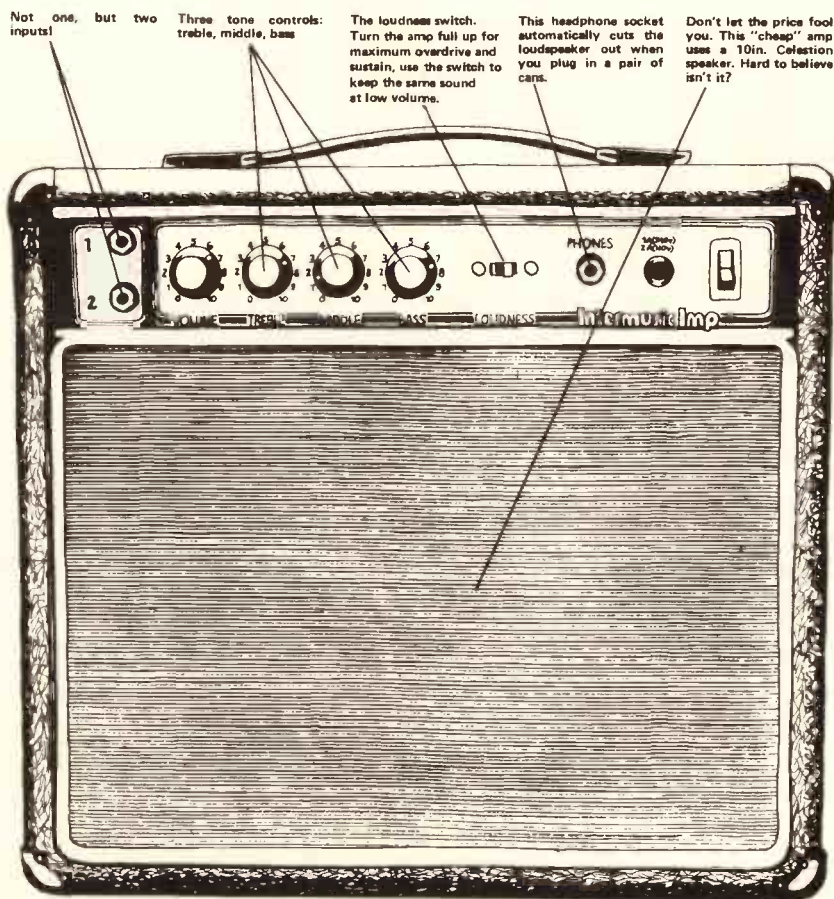
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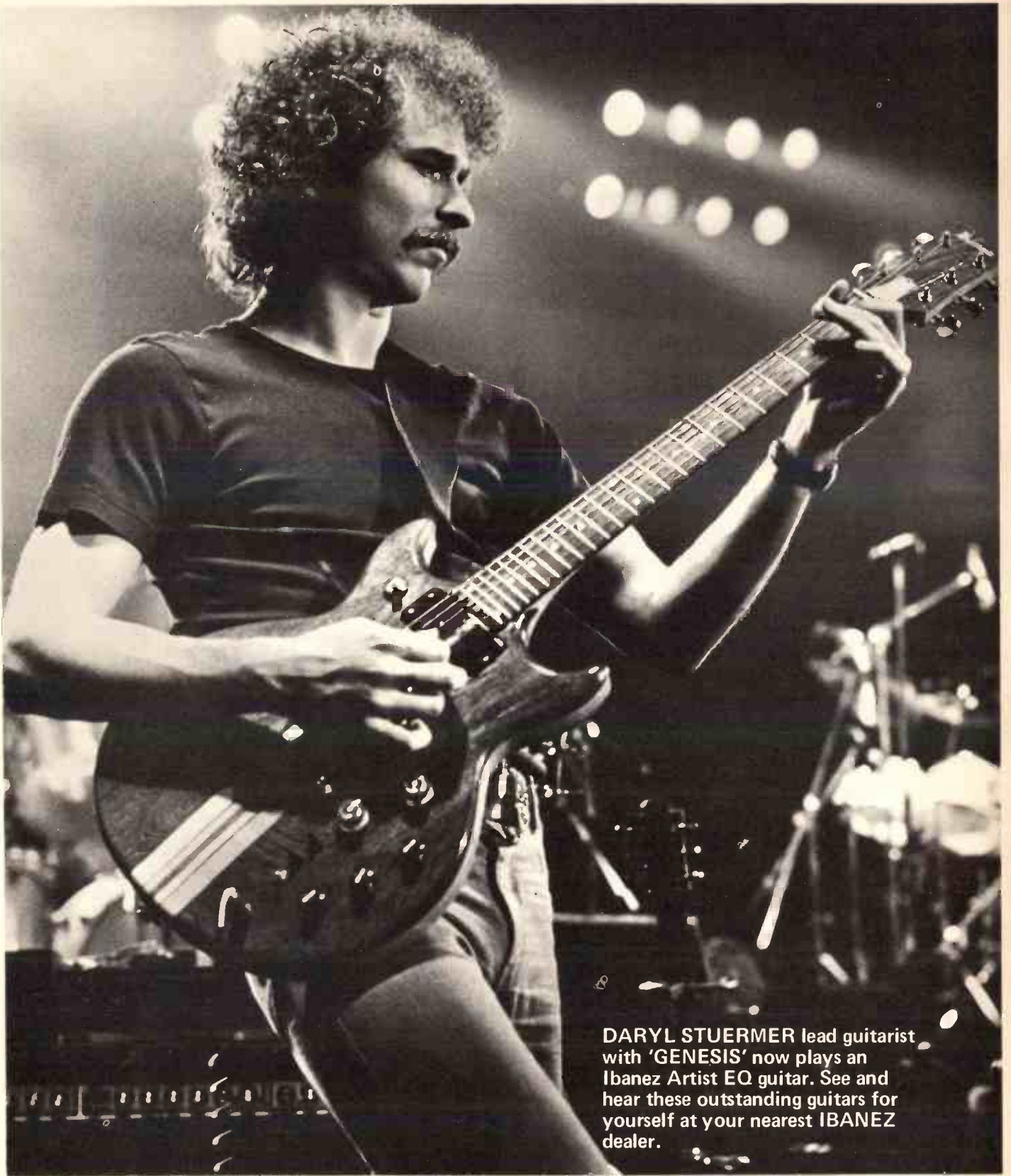
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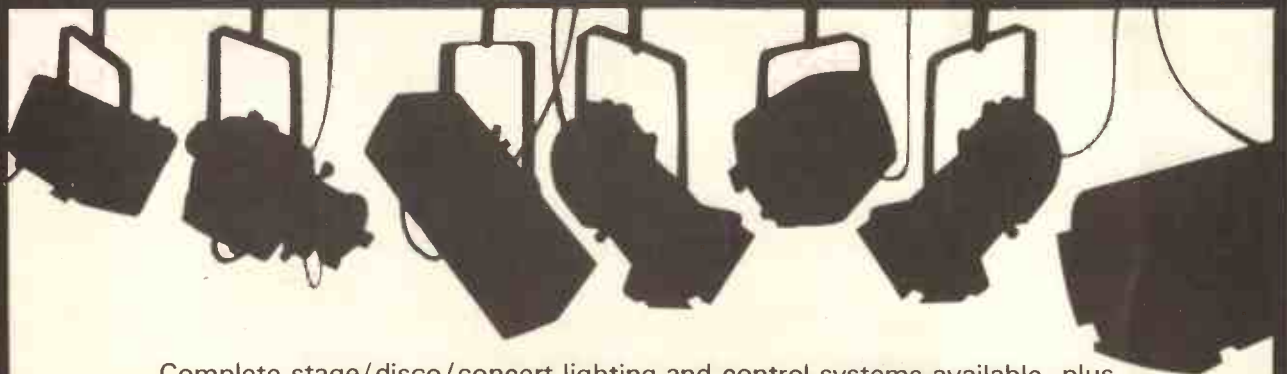
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LETTERS and QUERIES



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Bread or batter?

Dear Sir,

Having owned an old wood snare drum (dimensions 14" x 5") for two years I still strive to get a clean, crisp sound out of it. I have tried all combinations of tensions on both batter and snare head, and different tensions of snares, all to no avail. I've fitted a Remo Ambassador Weather King batter head in the hope of more fullness and responsiveness, but the drum still has a loose, flat, boomy sound.

Would you suggest changing the snare wires, which at the moment are 20-strand, for a more responsive set? I also get an irritating snare buzz on hitting my toms. My diagnosis is that the snares are individually slightly out of line from one another, causing an uneven tensioning on the head. Any suggestions on this would be helpful.

One last thing: what are the signs that a snare head needs replacing? After all this, you probably think I need a new, modern snare. At the moment I do! Keep up the good work.

Martyn Waller,
Barnsley.

Maybe you need a new drum, maybe you don't. It's impossible to be definite without seeing it for ourselves. As a general rule, however, it's safe to say that the modern taste for "clean, crisp" snare sounds is catered for by metal drums. A metal snare will always sound dryer and "harder" than a wooden one. If you are sticking with a wooden drum, the sound can be improved by increased tension on the heads (which you've already attempted) or by using the thinnest, clearest snare head you can find. You can get rid of boom by running a strip of felt under the batter head, held in place between the rim and the wood. This deadens the sound.

The snare wires themselves are unlikely to be at fault. You have tried various tensions on them, and if increased tension was no improvement we must search elsewhere for the source of the problem. The bottom head (i.e. the snare head) is unlikely to need replacing as a result of playing, since you aren't actually hitting the thing. Try a thinner head, as already suggested.

You want a new, modern snare? Inexpensive (if you call around £70 inexpensive) metal snares which are also good value are made by Tama and Pearl, amongst others. Second-hand you might pick one up for less than £70.

Out of reach

Dear Beat,

My ambition, like many fellow bassists, is to one day own a Rickenbacker. As I am sixteen and still at school a Rick is well out of reach; I am therefore considering buying one of the many good copies on the market (stereo if possible) I would appreciate some prices (up to about £160) of these copies, and any advice you could offer. At the moment, incidentally, I am using a CMI Precision copy, which I like. Do CMI make a Rick copy?

Kevin Precious,
Hull.

One would think that such a question would be easy to answer, but many of the importers and distributors we spoke to were exceedingly cagey about giving information. The reason is that the work COPY is now taboo in the guitar business. There is no longer any such beast as COPY a REPLICIA. There are only "guitars based on a well-known American design" or "guitars of Les Paul/Stratocaster/Rickenbacker, etc. style."

Basses, both at £110. The cases for the latter will be available in February at £25.

What advice can we offer? Well, it looks as though only the Hondos are within your price range. On the evidence of the Hondo Precision bass copy (sorry, design), their HRB2B and HRB2S must be well worth a look.

Squealer

Dear Sir,

I would like to make a few comments on your review of the Wilson Black Pearl guitar which appeared in the September issue. You mentioned that it was one of the cheapest solid-bodied electrics you had ever tested, but there are surely many cheaper guitars (less than £120 which are also considerable better).

This leads me to the question — why haven't you reviewed some of these even cheaper guitars, because there are many people — students and out-of-work guitarists — who regard £120 as a lot of money. I'm on the dole after leaving school with two 'A' levels (wow!) and I would agree with your advice about looking in the music sections of Melody Maker and Exchange & Mart for good second-hand instruments. But I also think that people should be more aware of the potential of cheap instruments, which can often be turned into really good axes with a little bit of work, which requires more patience and common-sense than master-craftsman ability.

I own a Columbus Les Paul copy which cost me £30, and I have modified it so that it is easy to play (to me at least). The pick-ups weren't exactly ace: they fed back. I looked under the covers and what did I find? Single-coil jobs hiding beneath chrome "humbucker" covers! This is the case with quite a few of the cheaper copy guitars, apparently. To stop the squealing feedback I poured wax into the cover and around the coil, and this has cut the noise to an acceptable level.

I have also polished the frets and cleaned up the fingerboard. To me, playability and the pick-ups are the two most important factors. You can get good pick-ups for under £25, I understand.

Here is a suggestion: either do a review on five or six cheapish guitars, comparing them with one another, or write an article directed at those who, like



Rickenbacker bass: still an ambition.



Columbus: one good brand in the copy field. The Strat (above) and Les Paul versions remain popular buys.

myself, have only a limited amount of money to spend on guitars and amplification.

Phil Allen,
Gerrards Cross,
Bucks.

Living in Gerrards Cross and short of money, eh? We thought the stockbroker belt was one

part of the country where Gibsons grew on trees. Never mind. To answer your points in order—

There are indeed cheaper guitars than the Welson Black Pearl, but precious few these days, and fewer still which could be described as good. Yours is a Columbus — you may be interested to know that the price of a new Columbus currently stands at £130. It is a sad fact that you have no alternative but to go second-hand if you don't have the money. All the guitar players who eventually "made it" tell stories of how they scrimped and saved for the guitar they not only wanted but needed. If this meant working overtime in an asbestos factory or shovelling manure for a living, they did it, because they thought it was worthwhile.

You are quite right about the "disguised pick-up syndrome. Readers beware! The feedback was caused by the vibration of the covers, and thus the wax fill put a stop to it. A firmer substance like resin will work even better. And yes, polishing and perhaps filing (very carefull) the frets is a must. A bit of wax polish applied to your cleaning rag will do the fingerboard no end of good.

First, however, don't forget

that very simple things can also be preventing your guitar from sounding as it should. Have you put some decent strings on the guitar since you bought it? Have you adjusted the action and the intonation to the point where the guitar both feels and sounds acceptable? As for the pick-ups, Di Marzio and Mighty Mite are both well respected as replacements. Di Marzio Super Distortions are £29.95 each, Dual Sounds £31.95 each, and the FS-1 is £24.95; Mighty Mite single coil pick-ups are £16.25, whilst the humbucker costs £21.50. Oh, and there's also an article on the whole subject further on in this issue.

Lastly, why don't we review five or six cheap guitars together? This is an interesting idea — maybe we'll take you up on it. We always endeavour to cover the lower end of the market. If we seem to review a lot of expensive gear as well, it's because we also have to cater for the richer inhabitants of Gerrards Cross.

Beatle-backer

Dear Sir,

I have some queries which have been bugging me for some time and I'd be grateful if you could fill me in.

- 1) What is the make of Rickenbacker 6-string guitar that John Lennon was always seen playing with the Beatles in the early sixties?
- 2) How much is the Hofner bass — the violin bass used by Paul McCartney, and why is it not included in your Equipment Price Guide?
- 3) What P.A. set-up did the Beatles use in the sixties?
- 4) Did the Beatles use Vox AC30's or 50's on stage?
- 5) How come that in the very early Beatle photos you see them playing Hofner, Rickenbacker and Gretsch guitars when they were earning about ten bob a night?
- 6) In what keys did the Beatles record 'She Loves You' and 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand'?

Eric Thompson,
Larne,
N. Ireland

1) Lennon ended up with a semi-acoustic, model 1996, which was advertised, after 1963, as the Beatle-Backer. In 1960 he was playing a natural Rick with a Bigsby tremolo and ¾-scale neck. The next was a black 325, also with a Bigsby. This model had a full-scale neck and a thinner body.

2) The violin bass currently

retails at £184 and the case at £15. It is not included in our Price Guide at the moment, but we have asked the distributors, Barratts of Manchester, for a price list of the entire Hofner range.

3) The lads used to hire their PA most of the time; in Germany they sometimes used an Echolette system (system in those days meant a pair of columns).

4) Both AC30's and AC50's were used during the gigging years, Paul using mostly the AC50. Later models were named after them, i.e. Beatle amps and Beatle cabinets, as they moved up through Vox range.

5) In the early sixties it was possible to make quite good money performing live. It would be wrong to equate the £15 a night you made in 1963 with the £15 a night most semi-pro bands are STILL being paid today. The prices of guitars and amplification have risen astronomically since then, whilst gigging fees have remained pitifully low. This is due largely to the emergence of disco's.

6) Listen to the records and find out!

O pear

Dear Sir,

I have recently acquired an old Vox pear-shaped bass which I believe dates back to the sixties. I was wondering if you could give me any idea as to how many of this type were produced and how much it cost when new.

M. Mears,
Bideford,
Devon.

The Vox pear-shaped guitars, both 6-string and bass, were made between 1965 and 1968. The very first was made for the late Brian Jones, who apparently took to it immediately; Bill Wyman received the first bass, but since he favoured the round tone of the old semi-acoustic basses, his was accordingly a hollow model. Later basses were solid, and in fact only fifty of the semi-acoustic pearshaped type were made. In all, just five hundred of the three varieties came off the production line, though perhaps this is the wrong term since they were hand-made virtually throughout the manufacturing process. Your particular bass (presumably a solid) would have sold for about 95 guineas. Remember guineas?

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PATRICK MORAZ

In search of the ultimate synthesizer

Patrick Moraz must have the most boring credentials in the world. With Refugee in the early Seventies, he went on to join Yes, making Relayer with them at a weekend's notice, before settling into his current swivel chair behind the keyboards of the Moody Blues. If that's not enough to give you lockjaw from yawning, Patrick runs a solo career, plays the odd jazz festival and has more keyboards than the average small shop.

In keeping with this alarming lack of street-level credibility Patrick knows how to use his gear and is well-equipped to discuss it; I therefore found myself hacking a path to his room through the fur-piled carpet of one of London's snappiest hotels in search of the usual tape recorder-full of technical information and opinions.

His background, to begin with, is obvious. He trained classically and went in for piano competitions "until I realised that music should not be competitive." At the same time, he soaked up all the appropriate influences: folk music, jazz, Beethoven, Bach, Stravinsky and Rachmaninov. Later on, he listened to Yes! "All the training and influences were very important," he admitted, "but I soon realised that if I wanted to expand my horizons I would have to become more self-taught."

More to the point for the aspiring keyboard player, Patrick was not born in the middle of a vast bank of expensive keyboards. All collections do begin with one, after all. "When I started as a professional I just had a Hammond M100. The first things I added were a Wurlitzer and glockenspiel for different colours. I always imagined great possibilities for a multi-keyboard set-up, and by '69 I had already built-up my gear to include a Pianet, a vibraphone — these were all useful instruments at the time."

That list pales into insignificance next to the vast array used on this current solo album (Patrick Moraz), but before we could sink our teeth into the meat of the interview we changed course (just for the sake of the millions who love the bands) to take in a few words about Yes and the Moody Blues.

On the frenzied wastes of Relayer: "I think it was the most progressive record that Yes ever made. It was going in a very interesting direction.

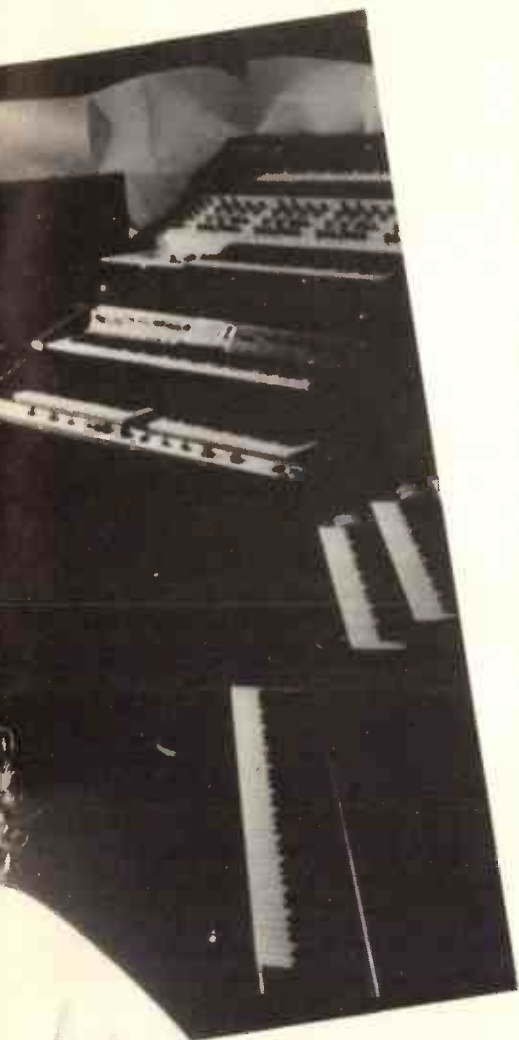


Take the solo off Sound Chaser, for instance. That had a very intense jazz rock feeling which they haven't carried on: in a way, it's possible that the technique I've developed for playing solos is faster than Rick's. I won't ever knock Rick — he's a great player for what Yes are doing now. I could do the solos, but I played a more orchestral role during my period with them. I think the best Yes albums are Fragile, Close to The Edge, the Yes album especially. Going For The One was a good album. I developed it with them for

two years but I never got any credits on the album. A lot of the harmonic and rhythmic progression in Awaken, the big number, was my work."

In that case, what did Patrick think of the way the wealthy Rick had played passages written by his forerunner? "He played it very well, except probably the piano, which is a different style. Having heard the new album only twice I may say that I'm glad I'm not in the band any more. Don't get me wrong, it may sound great on stage, but the music is not universal enough for me. It's a bit too complicated for what it wants to say."

by
Chris
Simmonds



Not half as complicated as Relayer, eh Patrick? "Ah, I was never associated with the writing of Relayer." Well, it wasn't a case of making the best of a bad job, was it? (I never asked him all these saucy questions in the hotel, by the way). "I found the ideas and playing on Relayer very interesting — the way they can twist a track, the overdubbing system." Beyond a certain guarded honesty, Patrick won't put the boot in on Yes. However, most people must go along with the theory that the muse started taking long holidays after the days of Close To The Edge.

Had the split with Eddie Offord had any bearing on this alleged decline, I ventured? "Up to the live

album, Eddie had a great deal of influence, but not on Relayer. He became less involved before he split." After Relayer, as the world knows, Yes ironed out their personal differences with the wayward Rick and returned to the opinion that he had to be the best keyboard player in the world. They kissed and made up, and with no hard feelings Patrick was eased back into the big wide world.

The Moodies, of course, are now making use of Patrick's undoubted keyboard talents, and I put it to him that the laid-back orchestral tones of the Moodies were much nearer to Patrick's true musical spirit than the techno-flash of Yes. "Let's say that Octave is much easier to play in terms of chords and lines, but playing it with the right feel and emotion is as difficult in its own way as playing Yes material. It's the intention, not the notes. The band is still rooted in the blues idiom."

Patrick got the job because, so the story goes, Mike Pinder is breeding finches and/or has some financial entanglements and is generally a little out of it at the moment. Whatever happened to Mike? "I've been asked this question many times. I don't even know Mike. I don't know what happened, really. All I know is I've been called in to do a gig with the Moody Blues, and I know that the door is always open to him. Even if they wanted to carry on with me and him, whatever, I'm sure there would be a possibility of a compromise. The whole situation is very loose. They let me get on with my solo career, play my jazz festivals..."

Regard the Yes and Moody Blues sections as a totally separate part of the interview, gratuitous garnish. We now move onto Patrick Moraz as just a damned good keyboard player in his own right. Just to get in the swing of things clap your peepers over the keyboards he used on the solo album: marimbas, harpsichord, Steinway grand piano, vibraphone, Hammond C3, Minimoog, Polymoog, custom built eight and four voice Oberheim synthesizers, Computron, Yamaha CS80 polyphonic synthesizer, Micromoog, Sennheiser Vocoder, Yamaha CP70 electric grand, Mellotron Mk2, ARP Pro-soloist plus effects.

As usual on his solo albums, Patrick keeps a theme going to give him an excuse for weaving in all his different sounds: in this case it's the effect of civilisation on the primitive world. The album features just Patrick and a Brazilian percussionist called Djalma Correia on various unpronounceable ethnic instruments — but what about Patrick's

keyboards?

On the Vocoder: "Maybe that's just a little homage to Herbie Hancock and George Duke, as they play a lot in that fashion. I wouldn't do it over a whole album, but it was the first time I was able to express words on the record."

OK — what the hell is a Computron? "I've put that because I've used one of my polyphonic synthesizers as a computer. Instead of playing the notes with my fingers I've played the sixteen programmes of the Oberheim. I just hold a note with one finger or with gaffa tape. The way I played it, it sounded to me like a form of computer music — after all, a polyphonic synthesizer which remembers everything is a mini-computer."

Another instrument from the list is the Mellotron, but it transpires that Patrick has become dissillusioned with it. "I'm not really interested any more in sounds produced by tapes, I've turned to proper synthesizer sounds. As for the Moodies, I know they have a sound with the mellotron which they developed, but they didn't use one on Octave. But I respect what they did — Mike was the first person to bend a note on a mellotron. I've always thought that the Hammond and the Minimoog sounds were classics, and before it happened I imagined that synthesizers would become polyphonic and offer a greater range of possibilities."

At the same time as Patrick is developing his role as Mr. Polyphonic Synthesizer, some of his instruments from the past have fallen by the wayside. Whatever became of the Orchestron, something he was deeply involved in some years ago? "This company approached me in America and they used my name to develop the company, but I was never happy about the way things were going and they were never able to fix me up with a machine that worked properly. I paid money in to them to develop the big three manual Orchestron — I've never seen the money, I've never seen the instrument and they've never developed the machine the way it had to be. So I don't want to be associated with them, and I'm not backing the product up in any way at all. It was a fantastic idea, you know. It was already invented in '49, and in America you have seventeen years to hold an exclusive license before it becomes public. The idea was a plastic disc read by a photocell, and the disc was cut by laser. There were these problems that had to be ironed out — there was no delay, some kind of re-entry problem anyway, it

PATRICK MORAZ

doesn't matter as I'm not interested in those sounds now."

But one love affair — the grand piano — remains constant. "The piano is the most basic instrument, but at the same time it is a symphony orchestra by itself. Intentions is a spontaneous piano improvisation, and that track is complete with just piano."

On the amp side, Patrick has stayed with his old system of putting everything directly through the PA. "Everything except the Hammond," he explained, "and with the Moodies there isn't a Hammond." It follows that his monitoring becomes vitally important. "Well, my foldback system is really a mini-PA. It's all DI'd. I use Amcron amps, and in America I am to use an S4 system, one developed by Roy Clair. It'll have crossovers, horns, bass — everything — and it will give me the truest sound possible. It's just like a giant hi-fi system. I'll also be adding a reverb unit, probably EMT. Yes used the same people as the Moodies do now, so it'll be the same 32 channel Clair we used in Yes, and it's flown from America to Europe. In

Europe we sometimes add some of the Tasco system. It won't be a repeat of Yes in America simply because they are the only band I know who sometimes play from the middle of the arena."

Apart from the instruments he has chosen to convey his theme on the album, two other items of interest emerged from the way Patrick had set about recording. The first was the fact that he did it all from the studio control room. "It's not a new idea; some guitarists take a long lead and sit in the control room to get an exact picture, but I've extended this further by recording all the electronic instruments there. That permitted me not to do many overdubs. I had the Oberheim eight voice, the four voice, the Minimoog, the Yamaha CS80 and the bass pedals right behind the mixing desk. I was able to position the sounds as we were going along. I think the stereo image of this album is very important as it's really an imaginary film. The percussionist stayed in the studio, and on some parts of the album there's just the two of us playing it all at the same time. You see, I never wanted it to sound like 'a keyboard album'. The lead line of Temples of Joy probably sounds like a guitar — it's not." There's a nice inversion of the Queen

'no synths' philosophy!

The second little trick up his sleeve was something he's dubbed LSP. "That's just a little black box which appears to radically change the sound of the stereo picture. An engineer in Switzerland designed it, and we could have cut the album with this box without having to mix it at all. We'll call it LSP — for Large Stereo Processing."

Three cardboard boxes with Wasp written on the side were perched on the table — proof that Patrick had discovered another keyboard he felt he could put to good use. "I think it's a great instrument," he raved, "and for that price it puts the synthesizer into anybody's pocket. It sounds fantastic through an amp. Of course with the keyboard being flat you have to develop a very different technique."

Now, if Yes and the Moody Blues don't seem to you to be expanding the frontiers they once did, don't make the mistake of writing Patrick Moraz off as just the latest member of this rarified set. The man has a lot of keyboards, knows how to use them, and will probably be the first off the starting block when technology unveils yet another incomprehensible synthesized beast and needs someone to play it properly.

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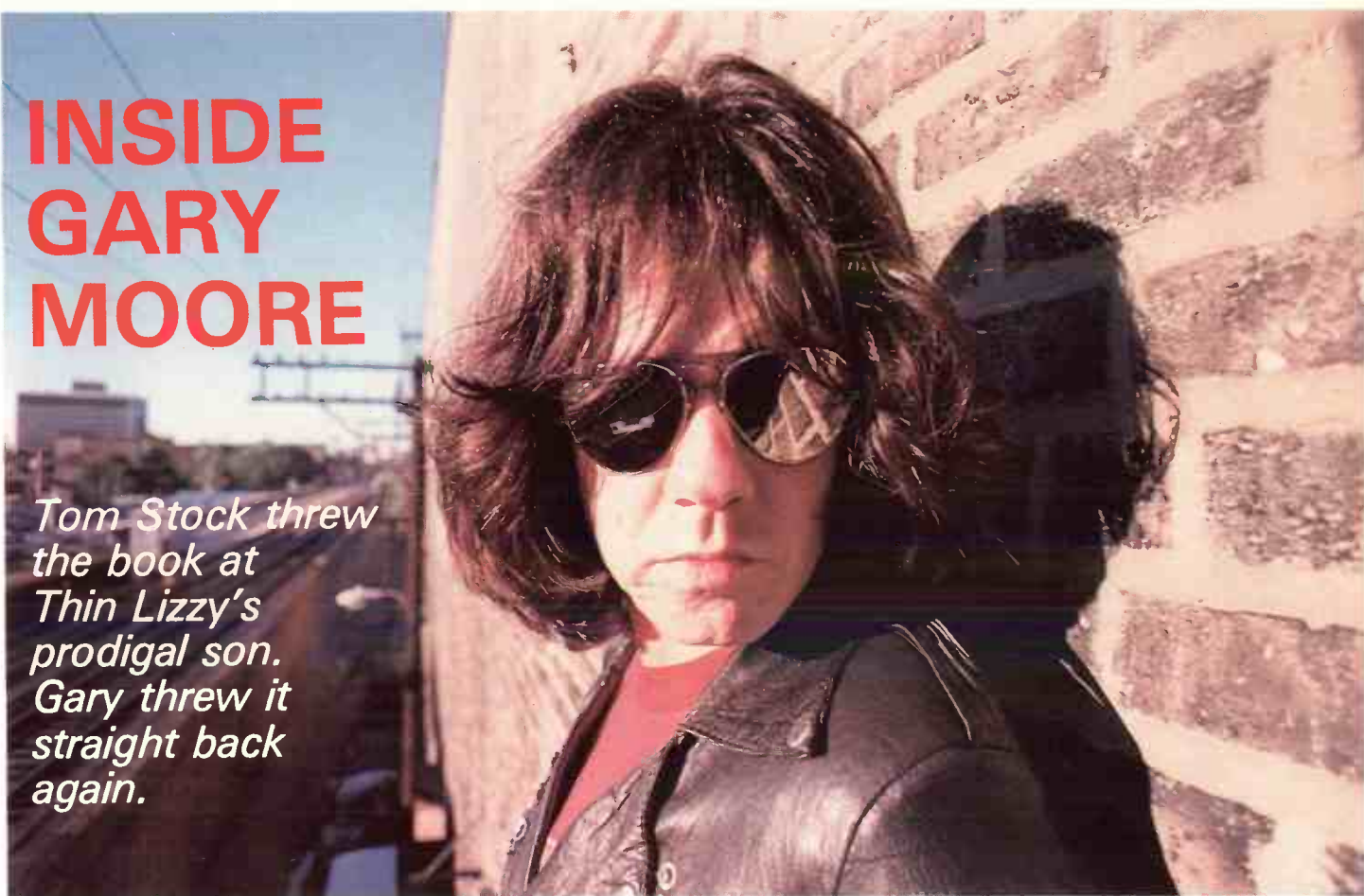
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INSIDE GARY MOORE

Tom Stock threw the book at Thin Lizzy's prodigal son. Gary threw it straight back again.



Yes, it's Lizzy time again! Only sixteen months have passed since Phil Lynott graced our coveted front cover; only seven since Brian 'Wild Horses' Robertson was catapulted to subsequent obscurity in the same place. So why another Lizzy-ite so soon?

The simple answer would be that I had a passing interest in seeing how new guitar player Gary Moore was settling down with the redoubtable ligger triumvirate of Lynott, Gorham and Downey (even though 'settling down' in Lizzy equates with ordering the sea to retreat!) — but there's more to it than that. You lot who voted for the archetypal BoFs in a recent weekly paper's annual poll: has your favourite band been on tour recently? Has it produced two platinum albums in a space of fourteen months (including an unprecedented double live set)? Does it maintain any level of street credibility by association with the more refreshing elements of the new wave? The questions could go on and on. At least you gave them the 'Best Album' award.

Thin Lizzy, by maintaining a hard touring schedule and a steady stream of tough, driving albums have managed to avoid the 'Supergroup' tag, even though in terms of sales etc., they are probably one of the biggest: the stigma of inactivity has not yet blown in their direction, and so the inclusion of Gary Moore as a permanent member, plus the fact the man has a solo album out on MCA pushed him onto the cover!

So, who's Gary Moore then? "The best rock guitarist in the world" is Phil Lynott's reply, although it must be admitted that Phil has something of a vested interest at stake! To find the answer for myself, I spent a highly entertaining few hours with Gary and the rest of the band down at Good Earth studios in Soho where they were working on the forthcoming Lizzy album.

When did you start playing the guitar?

I started playing when I was about ten or eleven years old. My father was a promoter in Northern Ireland, so I was seeing showbands live when I was five years old and I'd always been in touch with music through him. I have this vague recollection of bits of drum kits and PA stuff around the house. I think it was just meant to happen: he came home one day and asked if I wanted to learn to play the guitar, so I said yes. I'd always had like a lot of music in my head. A friend of my dad's bought me this Framus guitar — cello bodied, F-hole it was. It literally was like a cello against me 'cos I was so small and I could hardly get my fingers around the neck! He showed me the A major chord and that was the only tuition I've ever had!

Who was there to listen to at that time, then?

I started listening to the Shadows — from the word go I was never interested in

playing rhythm guitar. I always wanted to be a lead guitarist — that was my big thing, you know?

But it's difficult to learn lead just on your own, isn't it, not having any rhythm helping you out?

Yeah — I had to copy Hank Marvin solos (that's as far as I can go 'cos I'm too young to remember anything earlier than that). My old man was into Little Richard and Chuck Berry and all that sort of thing — like he turned me on to rock'n roll, but I was too young to really appreciate it so I didn't get into it until the sixties.

After Hank Marvin?

Well, then the heavier stuff came along — I really got into Jeff Beck. In fact I was talking about that on the way here: the thing I always remember about Beat Instrumental from those days is reading about Jeff Beck — that's the first time I ever heard of him — in Beat — and I thought I ought to check him out so I

started listening to the Yardbirds — that completely turned my head around.

How could you copy Beck's solos on that Framus?!

I conned my old man into buying me a Telecaster by joining this band. I said I'd stay with this band and I'd pay for the guitar. He put the deposit down and as soon as I got the Tele I split the band up took the drummer with me and formed a trio. (He's probably still paying for it!) I remember picking it up — Fenders have this certain smell to them!

What happened next?

I left school just before I turned sixteen, went to Dublin and joined a band who at that time were just getting their stuff together. Phil (Lynott) was the lead singer. Skid Row was my first pro band — so it was straight out of school and into a professional outfit. I knew what I wanted to do — I was supposed to be doing O levels but I didn't want to get into that; you don't

need 'O' levels to play the guitar and that's all I've ever wanted to do.

But your musical experience at this point was just stuffed in front of the record player ripping off Jeff Beck solos?

Yes, that's just about it. There had been the Bluesbreakers album — and that just about revolutionised the whole guitar syndrome. It's the definitive Eric Clapton album. I learned all those solos, and then started playing them my own way putting bits in here and there and I'd played a bit in Belfast clubs where I met Rory (Gallagher). We were so poor then — like if Rory broke a string I'd lend him my guitar and vice versa — we couldn't even afford strings, it was that bad. We did quite a lot of gigs together — I had a little band called Platform Three playing all the old blues things.

So, when I met the guys from Skid Row I was standing in for their regular guitar man Dave Lewis who'd had a car crash — funnily enough he had another one last week. I wasn't really into their stuff — they were playing a lot of West Coast stuff, the Byrds, you know? (Sure do Gary) and I wasn't too sure — but the band did have something special: Phil was doing all these weird things at the time. He was only the lead singer — he couldn't play then — and he had this Bison Echo which was like his instrument. I really saw the band as a) a way of getting away from home, and b) I reckoned it could grow into something.

Did it?

Well, Phil split from the band after about six months and we continued as a three piece: we played support to a lot of the English bands which played the National Stadium in Dublin — people like Blodwyn Pig and Jethro Tull, and then Fleetwood Mac came over.

Is that significant?

Yeah — our managers had already approached Mac's manager, Clifford Davis, about an album we'd put down over here, but he'd said we'd have to wait until Fleetwood Mac came over. So, we played the gig and Peter really liked my guitar playing; he was knocked out. He came up to me — and he was, like my hero; I couldn't believe it, that he'd even talk to me, let alone invite me to jam later on! I sat up with him in the hotel jamming all night till about 6 in the morning. I couldn't believe it — I was walking around six foot off the ground. He was doing interviews over there and saying things like I was the best guitar player he'd ever played with — just getting out of hand... so he influenced their management to bring us over here, and they set up a tour for us, and we scrapped the album and re-did it and managed to make it sound worse than the first time. We were such twits — we didn't know what we were doing.

Anyway, we had some crazy promotional hassles with our management who were always putting us in the wrong places at the wrong time, so I decided to split around the end of 1970. It wasn't all that amicable a split either — they'd started concentrating more on going down well than on playing well which is how we started out: we just played a load of **** on stage, getting really out of it all the time. I like to have fun yeah, but I need to have

the music going on as well as it just wasn't happening anymore.

I've always tried to keep the music end together in everything I've ever done.

Where did you go to?

I got my own band together — the Gary Moore band; we did one album for CBS called 'Grinding Stone' which didn't sell too well although it became something of an underground cult hit in the States for some reason; a lot of people picked up on it over there. The band lasted about two years, but we ran into financial difficulties and the mandatory trouble with the management, so we split the whole thing up.

Wasn't this around the time you had the first flirtation with Lizzy?

Yeah — we split up after I'd had a call from the band when Eric Bell left in the middle of a tour of Ireland at the end of '73 — we managed six hours of rehearsals and there I was on stage! Anyway, that lasted about six months and I put in quite a lot of work on the Nightlife album: but it was beginning to get a bit like Skid Row all over again — and I was getting tired of working in a three piece; I'd two years of it with Skid Row, and my own band ended up like that 'cos I couldn't afford to keep the other musicians.

That's pretty taxing on your style isn't it?

Well, that's the only way I can play anyway: if the space is there you know, I can fill it; I just found the whole thing was becoming too restricting and it wasn't musical because that whole middle range of the music was missing. The rhythm section would be bouncing along and I'd be right over the top of it but that middle bit was missing the whole time and there was nothing to give the thing any real shape or form to the listener. In a sense you have to play less rather than more because if you're playing anything adventurous, like modally or anything scale-like, over a root bass note, it just wouldn't make any sense. You have to stick real close to what the bass is playing all the time, and that's not really music; if you've got to think in the same key as the bass all the time — well, it just doesn't work for me: so I got out of the band.

There followed a few months of self analysis then, didn't there, before you re-emerged with Jon Hiseman?

Yeah — I had a real look at myself before calling Jon; I'd read somewhere that he was thinking of reforming Colosseum or getting something together, and I'd got this thing in my head that all I wanted to do was play with the best musicians in England, without giving a **** about what I would actually have to do. I'd decided to raise my own playing standards, and the best way to do it would be to play with the very best musos available. I was tired of frigging around, and I'd really straightened myself out and said, 'right, I'm just going to **** play with the best people I can get.'

So who did you find?

Well, there was Jon, and Mark Clarke who'd been with him in Tempest, and Graham Bell. Graham's like his own worst enemy — he's a lovely guy — but he was, like, so out of it all the time he just got lost 'cos the three of us together were such a **** powerhouse. We had a fantastic

blow together one night, just blow our **** away: it was how I'd imagined it was playing in Cream or something, 'cos those two, Mark and Jon, they didn't have to look at each other. They'd been playing together for, like, three years and they had a fantastic rapport going and I was really going on this 'til Mark split and that really brought me down. He went to the States with Ken Hensley — don't ask me why 'cos I'm still trying to figure that one out!

I took Jon and I a year and a half to actually get Colosseum II on the road — the real **** was trying to get a keyboard player — we auditioned 55 keyboard players. I don't mean they came in and played a few bars, I mean some of those guys were with us for three weeks at a time just exploring the potential that might be there and Don Airey was just about the last guy to come along: we nicked him from Cozy Powell, and boy were we lucky — he was exactly what I was looking for. I wanted someone I could really bounce off, who could play the Jan Hammer style, and Don was the only guy who could do it. He was amazing!

How long did that line-up keep together?

We did a couple of Continental tours, but it wasn't good with Mike Stars — it was hardly a gig for a singer while we were off on the long instrumental passages; so we asked him to leave, and we asked Neil (Murray) to leave, and we started looking for another bass player and we came up with this guy John Mole, and that worked out pretty good. We had two albums — considering all the faults I still look at that band as being unique. The level of integrity and musicianship was very, very high.

Although the gig wasn't as physically exhausting as say a Lizzy gig, it just drained me all the same; it was really intense, and I'd deliberately set up to be difficult like that. We never got bored; everyone had their own solo spot, everyone had the chance to get out there and make something of themselves and that was like part of the challenge: plus, the material was structured in such a way that you didn't have to play in the same way every night; you could go off on tangents, develop it a different way each time. The whole thing was really flexible, and that's what I liked about it.

So, what went wrong there?

I think looking back now, I'd equate it with any of those bands overloaded with creativity — the John McLaughlin approach — a meteoric rise, and then the burn out. We had this burst of energy at the start, and the band was way over most people's heads; the tracks were long and we never got radio space, and the music was over-complex although I still consider most of it to be very strong, and in fact the only thing that really drew attention to Colosseum when they hit their biggest peak was the fact that I'd been with Lizzy for three months on the Queen tour. Which brings us up to last year when I got a call in Austria asking me to do the American tour with them 'cos Brian had cut his hand up, you know, and I agreed. In fact I had set aside that period to work with Phil anyway, so I did the gigs.

Continued over ...

GARY MOORE

Can we talk about your solo album now? Who did you record with?

Simon Phillips is on most of the album. There's some playing by him which is just unreal. We did all the solos live, right, with no overdubs, so we're playing together and you can really hear that. The two guys from Colosseum — John Mole and Don — are in there as well. Don's great — he has great harmonic and chordal knowledge and he's very good at helping me to arrange things, to get them technically right. He gets all the correct modulations whereas a guitarist will play the chords as he knows them, Don will back you out of that and make you colour the thing a little bit more.

So that's where he came in really useful. Plus John was the only bass player around at the time that could handle the arrangements — not that they were difficult, long complicated things — let's face it, just to get any bass player to keep up with Simon was difficult enough!

Phil and Brian (Downey) are on a couple of tracks as well — the more bluesy numbers, like we did a slow version of

'Don't Believe A Word' which in a way is a tribute to Peter Green because I've done it in his Black Magic Woman style, with that real feel to it which I still really love. I still listen to Peter Green's playing. He was definitely the best blues guitarist ever — white or black.

It seems such a waste somehow that he just stopped.

I saw him a few months ago and played him 'Don't Believe a Word' and he loved it. The odd thing was he said 'That's like something I'd write': he didn't cop for a minute that I'd got it from him. He didn't seem to realise that he was a very big guitarist once and meant a hell of a lot to a lot of people but he remembers everything about me in frightening detail. He didn't seem to remember a lot about himself or his own past. I mentioned I'd listened to 'that John Mayall album the other day' and he said, 'which one's that?' and I said 'Hard Road', and he just said, 'oh yeah, like that one did you?'

It was a very emotional episode for me because I've got the guy's guitar, you know, and he walked in and it was sitting in front of me and he just scraped across the strings but he wouldn't pick it up. It was very strange — but he's a great guy; I love the guy. I can understand what he went

through — I just didn't expect it from him as he was such a stable person, for something to snap just like that. It was a great loss — who knows what he could have done? ... where were we?

Still back with Colosseum, believe it or not! The Variations thing came along didn't it, just before you eventually did leave the band?

'Yeah — that's right. Andrew Lloyd Webber approached John about this project, the Variations. What happened for me on that score was that I never realised it was going to get so out of hand. We were in Morgan Studios for about two weeks working on the tracks for that and the next thing is mention of a performance, and then the next thing we were off to America, and then a TV show — and there we were in America. So I just said '**** this' and then the Robertson thing came up again, fight number 2 and I'd been wanting to work with Phil again and Phil had been waiting for the whole year. It was lucky as it happened because we didn't really waste the year — They'd been off the road for a while, and I'd been working on my album and Phil on his so we'd been working together in a way anyway.

How do you get on with Phil — after all, this is the third time you've been in a band with him?

Phil and me, I think, ironed out a lot of our difficulties a long time ago 'cos I was able to go out and explore what I wanted to do, and Phil has been able to do what he wanted to do; it's worked out really for the best because we've always respected each other, and we've always wanted to work together while there have been certain things which have prevented us from doing so. At the moment we're living together (pardon?) while I'm looking for a new place. We don't have any hassles. And Scott — I just get on great with him. People are saying the guitars sound so much better now and our sounds really blend together and Scott has really come out of himself — he's blown his **** off some nights out there.

He bought a new guitar while we were away — paid a lot of bread for it though, two thousand five hundred dollars for a Les Paul — sounds great though he must have been out of his mind!

How do you get on with Scott's playing?

Great — he has a lot more personal style than say Brian whom you could compare to a lot of other players. Now we're actually sharing the leads and there's more dual guitar work in Lizzy now than there ever was.

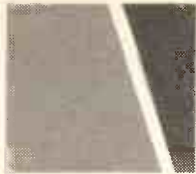
It's not competitive then?

No, I don't think so, not in that respect. I think we try to work with each other, as opposed to against each other. Each of us is going to do the best we can — but we're not out to blow each other off. Naturally we try to play our best when we're on stage — and that's the way it is.

Phil, I think, is a lot more relaxed about the whole thing now because he feels he's got a band which gets on together, he's got a band which wants to make good ***** music, wants to play good rock'n roll: and Lizzy is a unique band now in the

Continued over ...





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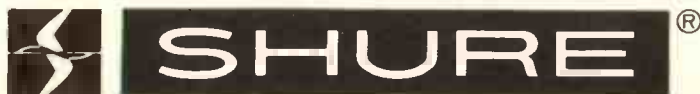
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GARY MOORE

way they cut across so many things. Although what they play is like very basic, they've got like the new wave influences — a lot of the stuff we've been doing is very, very aggressive. When you put American bands against Lizzy they look so ***** soft.

I mean, we've played with Kansas, Styx — do me a favour! They're all about 35 for a start those guys and you go out there and you're playing with them and they've got hydraulic lifts coming up with grand pianos and all that **** — I mean, I blush, (there followed here a tirade against Styx at a certain gig in the States!) It just makes you look at all that music and say 'why did I ever try to do anything?' it makes everything sound so ***** stupid, you know, that all you want to do is get out there and ***** kick ass every night: and that's the beautiful thing about Lizzy — it's just so direct. I mean, why put up barriers for yourself, why bother, what's the point?

We're not trying to educate people: you can hit people at gut level, and you can still do it with quality because the one thing that Lizzy definitely has over a lot of other bands is the quality of the songs. Phil writes such good ***** songs. He marries lyrics and melody so successfully in a heavy rock idiom, doesn't he? That's Phil's thing — he doesn't consider himself to be like a virtuoso bass player. He's not into that, and he doesn't have to be with

Lizzy, although he is a very good bass player and he's perfect for Lizzy. He and Downey just play so tight: they're like a ***** synchronised bass and bass drum: you should hear them in the studio, it's like ... it's just like one person; and it makes a great ***** bass for me to solo over because they never get in your way.

How is your solo playing developing in Lizzy's confines?

This sounds really pretentious in a way, but



"I don't think in terms of keys and chords when I'm playing"

I'm really starting to think of myself as like an illustrator, musically because I'm starting to go with Phil's words. I'd never realised it before, but I've been playing with the words all the time. Like in the Cowboy song when Phil goes 'these Southern girls don't seem the same' and I'll make the guitar whistle over the top: that's just one example, and then I started realising I was doing it all the time; and the movements too. When Phil goes, 'roll me over and turn me around' I'll turn around as he says it. Now I'm bringing it into the studio with me and trying to make every solo relate to the words. Like we do a song called 'S & M' and I want to make the solo on that sound like someone being whipped; forget the ***** scales and all that ****, it's got to be like an effects thing, you know? That's what it's all about — playing is one thing, but applying it is quite another. You've got all this technique at your disposal, but it's what you do with it that really counts.

That's especially true of much of the jazz-rock syndrome from which you've come isn't it? There's technique by the ton, but little meaningful application.

There's more to it than that — I mean, say, Jaco Pastorius, for all his technical experience, is never going to be a big star; and rock 'n roll isn't about living in obscurity; it's about being up there and pulverising people, and letting 'em know you're there, right?

Like Al Di Meola is like the perfect example of complete, cold playing. I went to see the guy and his technique is astonishing — but it wasn't a great

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discovery on my part to find he was so cold as I knew that anyway. Allan Holdsworth has a melodic sense that Di Meola will never have. Al comes from a classical background — his acoustic playing especially is so rigid; no matter how fast he's playing he's perfected it in the classical slow to fast method, just building up that speed; whereas I haven't, which is why I'm a very uneven player so I just ***** go nuts, and just go at it; I wouldn't bother sitting down and practising something slow. I mean, I don't know what I'm doing half the time.

People ask me 'how do you play' — and I don't know how I play. I don't think in terms of keys and chords when I'm playing; I'm at that stage now where I just know that neck and something else takes over when I play. Like if I was playing and you were trying to hold a conversation with me I just wouldn't hear a word you were saying — it's hard to describe. I get up there on stage and the whole world just ceases to exist apart from the music.

Can we talk about your guitars now, Gary? What are you playing at present?

On stage at the moment I'm using three different guitars. My main guitar is a 1959 Les Paul Standard. I got it from Peter Green and one of the pick ups had been reserved at the time — but it got changed back to normal. Actually Neil Murray did that by mistake. He used to clean my guitar for me every day; and he came in one day and said 'one of your pick ups was round the wrong way so I've changed it.' I left it that way 'cos the wire inside was too short then to reverse it again; so, after I'd shot him! . . .

I use a '62 Stratocaster as well and also a Melody Maker — I think it's 1960 vintage with a Di Marzio PAF on it and a set of Grovers, which I bought for £75 last time I was in the States. The Melody Maker is just . . . I can't believe it (*who can nowadays . . . Asst. Ed*): the beautiful thing about that guitar is . . . I had a vision for that guitar — **** that sounds stupid! I had a sound in my head that I wanted to hear and I just took a wild cast at it. I got the Melody Maker and got Andy, our guitar roadie, to stick the Di Marzio in, and the sound just came out the way I wanted it. I just did a solo with it last night, and the sound is just so ***** dirty, it's just unbelievable; it's got a real edge to it, and the harmonics and the top on it are great: it just screeches out at you. I've got it set up with a higher action than the Les Paul and fitted with lighter strings as well, so it's a real bendy job, you know? It's beautiful for bending for the real screechy solos. The strings on the Les Paul are like 10, 13, 17, 30, 42 and a 52 so that's got a real heavy bottom end to it. The Melody Maker ends with a 42 — and I've got the same set of strings — (Boomer Silver Bullets?) on the Strat as well.

Why the heavier strings on the Les Paul?

I'm not sure. For some reason I find on the Les Paul I just don't need to use very light strings. The neck is so good that I just get around it with no problem; I can use heavier strings and still bend them the same amount when it's set up properly. It's a beautiful guitar. That's my favourite guitar — I've had it longer than any other

I've owned — some six or seven years now and I really love it.

How does it compare with the Melody Maker which you seem to be quite fond of already?

I'm really getting into the Melody Maker now. I mean I've started using it for whole sets at one point because it's a very light guitar and I can jump around with it, you know?

Any other guitars?

Yeah — I've got another Stratocaster which I'm having completely rebuilt. I broke the neck off while I was having a row with me chick (that's all water under the bridge now.) So I've got the body of the guitar and I'm having a new neck built for it, and I'm having Di Marzio's put on it. I also have the real heavy modified tremelo unit, with a heavier bracket so you can break it off so easily! I'm really looking forward to checking that out because I think Di Marzio pick ups are a major improvement on the pu's supplied standard with the new Gibsons and Fenders. The one on the Melody Maker is great: I don't get noise off it or anything like that.

Mind you, for some reason, one of Scott's three Les Pauls, on the Custom one he's got two Di Marzios with Gibson covers on and they just screech all the time. I don't know what that's about. I can go straight into a Marshall crank, it up, and get the most beautiful sound without pedals or anything.



"Peter Green was definitely the best blues guitarist ever — black or white"

You're a Marshall man, aren't you?

Oh yeah, definitely. On stage I use just the one top — sometimes the Master Volume and sometimes just the straight two channel job and two 4 x 12" cabinets. I have them up on a flight case — not in a stack because on the real big gigs I'd rather get the spread width-ways. It really does make a big difference because I'm walking around all the time and if there were one underneath I just wouldn't hear it because Phil's right there beside me, and he plays loud, you know?

There's been talk that you'll be using radio pick ups.

Yeah — the Schaeffer Vega radio control. We've only tried them, like once, in New York. We haven't had a chance to work with them yet, but we want to get into using them as we need that freedom on stage. The way we all jump around and everything is tying us up in knots at the moment. Phil's the only one that's using it at the moment — he's been using it for like about a year. Plus there are a lot of interesting things you can do with it which I won't go into now because that's all part of the plan. They work OK with effects pedals in between the guitar and amp, and of course they cut out any chance at all of electric shocks feeding back — so that makes them definitely worth using. Mind you they cost about three grand each! A lot of people are using them — Neil Schon from Journey — he told me about another one which is much cheaper and is supposed to be much better for guitar, but I've forgotten the ***** name of it! I have found that these things affect the tone of the guitar because you've got to play at lower volume levels; they've got a gain and a pre-amp in them and that's the last thing I need!

What about extra effects pedals?

I use a Coloursound Overdrive, especially for the Strat because I find it really beefs it up; I use an Echoplex, but I don't know whether I can consider that a permanent feature as I'd like to find a better delay unit, but on the other hand the Echoplex is so simple: it's just got two controls on it which means I don't have to prick around with it all night. We just don't have the time to mess around with complicated effects. I've tried the MXR Digital Delay but it just takes so long to set it — you're better off having that just on the PA system. I also use an MXR Phase 100, and a Coloursound Wah-Wah, but as soon as we stop playing Johnny The Fox that'll be out the window: that's the only reason I use it because you can't get away without using it on that track.

Have you considered using a guitar synthesizer?

Yeah, funny enough, I went to the Frankfurt Trade Fair earlier this year (last year now Gary) and I managed to try out the Hagstrom Patch 2000 — and I was really impressed with that 'cos for my style, for the sort of speed thing, because it works on the frets — you can play it one handed. I think it scans the frets 2000 times a minute so there's no way I'm going to be ahead of it — forget that! The trouble is you can't play chords because it's only monophonic. Against that you can play it as a regular guitar and there's just one switch to bring in the synth section. I played it through an Oberheim Expander Module and it was beautiful.

But how did you get on with the guitar itself, which could be thought to be the system's drawback?

Yeah — it would be OK just for one or two numbers — I'd like to use that sort of thing purely as an effect; there's no way I'd want to play a Hagstrom guitar all night, but it would be nice to be playing something really simple and then just punch it in — I mean, What is that?!

I don't really want to get into it on the

GARY MOORE

level that keyboard players have for example. I'd like to use the Oberheim because it's got such a beautiful tone — it's only a little unit — and just go straight through. I think I'd use a different amp. You need a very high quality amp to handle synthesizers — especially the bass end. I'd use something like really clean for that particular sound. The other drawback is you can't bend notes — it would be amazing if you could bend normally because you could make it sound so expressive then — I find that synthesizers can take away the emotional aspects of the music. Still, I think it's a great idea: I've tried the Roland thing and it doesn't seem to respond as quickly, and it's a messy sort of sound and I don't like it. The Trade Fair though was pretty interesting — the Japanese certainly seemed to be taking over everything.

Speaking of the Orientals, have you tried out any of their guitars?

Yeah — I like the Yamaha — if they're out there and they want to give me a guitar, I'll use it, you know? — No, the thing is, the Yamaha is like what a Gibson *should* be now. They're just made so well, the tones, the neck, everything, they're great, I mean Santana was a *real* Gibson freak, and he's using the Yamaha; he'd been playing Gibson all his life, for years and years. I've tried the one that Midge from the Rich Kids has got — it's got a real good sustain on it, real nice heavy body — pretty much like a Les Paul in a way.

But, in the end, I think you can get like 'your sound' out of anything — any instrument that's playable and tunable, but it's a personal thing with a guitar.

You see, I'd like to get on better with the Strat than I do — but I've always had this sort of block against the Strat, even though I use one for a long time in Colosseum I always find myself drifting back to the Les



"I always find myself drifting back to the Les Paul"

Paul. It's a funny sensation that, because I've never found that I've conquered the Strat. I've never got far enough on top of it to say 'Yeah, I'm a Strat player.' With this new Strat that I talked about, I'm trying more to adapt it to my personal needs. The first thing is I want to get a thicker sound out of a Strat, a fatter sound, but yet have the facility of the tremelo arm. Eddie Van Halen's done it because he uses one old PAF Humbucker — that's all he uses, and it's not a real Strat anyway. It's a Schalsion or something — made in New York anyway. It's the heaviest Strat body I've ever picked up: anyway, he's got that pick up, one volume control, no tone control and that's it — and he gets a great sound such a big sound just from a Strat — mind you, the eight Marshalls may have had something to do with it! He's about the best I've seen this year — he's got a good sense of dynamics, with a lot of balls to his playing: in fact I like that band for that reason. They're the only American band with any ***** energy, any ***** ***** to them.

Well, the same could be said in a British context about Thin Lizzy. Gary Moore's re-entry, hopefully on a permanent basis this time (although people tend to have a habit of splitting bands just after talking to me) can only mean good for the band.

*The new album is scheduled for release sometimes before/around Easter '79, and judging by the couple of tracks I was able to preview in November, Lizzy are going to benefit from the introduction of Gary's combination of jazz speed with rock ***** We should, in fact, all benefit.*

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INSTRUMENT REVIEW

Amplifiers



BIRD BROTHERS SPIRIT OF '56 COMBO

Price: £219 ex. VAT

Reviewed by: Peter Douglas

The notorious Bird brothers came bustin' into the Beat offices with all guns blazing. When the smoke had cleared I picked myself up off the floor, dusted myself down and surveyed the place for damage. Miraculously there was none. The only difference was that a large box was now sitting in the middle of the floor looking like it had just fallen off the back of a stage bound for Medicine Hat.

At the risk of this little tale getting out of hand, it should be said that the Bird Brothers are a pair of Rochdale cowboys, Arthur and Peter by name. They are already well-known for their exploits throughout Lancashire County, but the Spirit of '56 amp is their first venture into the field of manufacturing. It joins a tiny field of hand-built valve-powered British-made combo's, and as such can only be a good thing.

But why Spirit of '56?

The answer is that the Brothers are, and I quote, "totally committed to making amplifiers the way amplifiers used to be made — with no compromises." Normally one would laugh bitterly at such a statement and toss the press release into the bin. It is, after all, the kind of thing every single amplifier manufacturer says about his own products. But a closer look reveals that:

1) The Brothers are currently turning out no more than five amps a week.

2) These amps are all lovingly hand-built by Admiralty-trained engineers, all joints individually wrapped like After 8 mints.

3) The whole lot is helped along quite considerably by four EL34 glass tubes, snortin' and smokin' at the back.

Instinctive

That is by no means all, either. One is instinctively pre-disposed in favour of the amp by the sheer appearance, which is reminiscent (to put it mildly) of the old beige Fender amps of, oh, round about 1956. You could tell the difference at 100 yards, but beyond that there are similarities.

First, however, the details. Nominally



the amp is rated at seventy watts r.m.s. This is a conservative rating (as it always tends to be on valve amps) and the noise comes out of a 15" ATC speaker. As it happens, the amp on review had a Fane speaker in it, but those coming off the bench now have an ATC. The amplifier section is controlled by (left to right) volume 1, volume 2, treble, middle, bass and master volume. On the far left are the two channel inputs, and on the opposite side are the indicator light, standby switch, on/off switch and fuse holder. The back panel, for a change, has absolutely nothing on it.

Old boots

In the classic manner the channel gains can be wound up to produce that warm, creamy distortion so beloved of guitarists from Rochdale to Ocho Rios. And conversely, a clean sound may be obtained by winding up the master. But all this is fatuous nonsense — you all know how these things work. All that remains for me to say is that the sound from the combo is as warm and creamy as a saucepan-full of Ambrosia.

A lot of this has to do with the fact that we are using valves instead of transistors, but it also has something to do with the size of speaker. Why, I wondered aloud during the Brothers' visit to Beat's shack, a 15" instead of the usual 12" or even 10"?

Peter Bird chewed ruminatively on a match as his hand twitched against the handle of his Smith & Wesson. A savage glint came to his eye as (*Oh, get on with it! Ed.*) Well, anyway, the feeling behind the decision to use a 15" was that most combo amps are lacking in middle, that they often sound rather thin. Well, let it be said here and now that the sound from this amp is successfully fat. It is especially suited to the requirements of some of the newer guitars coming on to the market. For example, I spent a while with the Ibanez Artist reviewed nearby, and the power of

the highs came through well, whilst the lower frequencies were thickened up and rounded out to a degree they were not by the other combo we happened to have in the office at the time.

We can skate lightly over the matter of construction. Tough as old boots, and the struts across the back provide perfectly adequate protection to the valves. There are metal corners all around the bottom, but none on the top, and I would suggest that the addition of four more would complete an otherwise excellent job. The handle at the top means that one man has got a lot of lifting to do. There again, the Bird Brothers also run a protection racket. The flight case (£65 extra) is built from 3-ply timber with aluminium seams, butterfly latches and snap-down handles. Then inside there's about two inches thick of foam. What this adds up to is the likelihood that the whole shooting match will probably survive World War Three. Let's just hope there'll also be a guitarist left alive to prise the case open.

Another of the striking features of the amp is its amazingly low signal-to-noise ratio. With the knobs all wound up to ten there was feedback all right, but hardly any hiss. At high volume the high frequencies from your guitar (assuming, of course, that it's a guitar you're amplifying) come rampaging through in earnest, and any remaining doubts about the suitability of this thing as a guitar amp are banished at once. With a speaker this hefty there must be a market of Rhodes players out there who would take to it like Ford workers to a strike.

In conclusion, a Bird in the hand is worth the two hernias you get lifting it. Or to put it another way, all the ideas built into this little combo are sound ideas, and my only regret is that you're going to have trouble getting hold of one. A lot are being shipped to Germany, where they still appreciate a good British valve amp, and my strong suspicion is that demand will soon outstrip supply. Answer: act now to avoid disappointment.

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INSTRUMENT REVIEW

Keyboards



YAMAHA SS30 STRING MACHINE

Price: £760 inc. VAT

Reviewed by: Tom Stock

As if to emphasise the fact that Yamaha now rank among the very top manufacturers of musical equipment — and the growing conviction that *they* know it too — their new SS30 string machine has been dropped in the market and, to some extent, left to its own devices in the deep end. After all, there is something of a genuine choice in quality string machines and at first the £760 asked for the Yamaha may seem expensive when compared with products from Roland and Logan among many others. However, on further inspection, the Yamaha does provide some extra facilities which take care of the price differences, and becomes a very attractive overall package.

Appearance

Indeed, it's the packaging which first strikes the eye: very similar indeed to the

CP30 and CP20 pianos, the SS30 comes in a mock rosewood cabinet. I'm devoted (aaaaah) to its appearance 'cos it would be very much at home in my lounge, but I'm not that sure about the surface's ability to withstand the inevitable knocks and scratches it's bound to receive on the road. All the controls (rotary and rockers) are black plastic, and all the lettering white.

Tuning

From left to right across the top of the keyboard the controls perform the following functions. Twin rotary controls (one inside the other) look after the tuning. The outer one handles tuning with other instruments, and the inner one slightly detunes the machine internally which can be used successfully to create some interesting string effects. The Vibrato has two rotary controls, one operating the length of delay before the vibrato comes into effect after a note is depressed, and the other affecting the amount of vibrato employed.

The sustain section, again, has twin rotary knobs, one for cello and the other for violin (embracing, in this instance, the viola voice). The cryptic 'KBD. SPLIT' affects the range over which the cellos operate on the keyboard — variable from one octave (C-C), through C—F sharp, to two octaves, C—C.

Volume

Next come one rotary and three rocker switches under the general 'Cello' heading. The Volume balances the cellos against the remaining voices — a very useful facility. 'Slow Attack' — also available on violins — is precisely that, giving that momentary mutedness which identifies violins and violas on slower passages. The other two rockers are labelled Cello 1 and Cello 2.

The four rockers in the Violin section operate 'Slow Attack', Viola, Violin 1 and Violin 2. Two rotaries under the 'Brilliance' heading add presence to cello and violin voices separately, and lastly there's an overall volume control.

On the same plane as the keyboard is the 'Orchestra' section: a rotary handling the 'depth' or amount of orchestra effect, a rocker giving two pre-set modulation speeds, and two rockers, one each for cello and violin. On the back panel is the mains input, jack sockets for foot controlled volume and sustain, and a line out jack.

OK, and now for the inevitable question — does it work? Simple answer, yes, and very well. All the voices approximate to their original acoustic instruments extremely well — provided you don't play the thing like a piano and organ using obligatory 5th chords. (When have you ever heard a string section playing like that?). The orchestral section especially warm and the variable modulation 'depth' only enhances the realism. The ability to delay the entry of vibrato is extremely effective when used to provide a solo violin over a held-down cello chord.

Sustain

The vibrato's entry can be delayed by anything up to a couple of seconds and when coupled with slow attack the SS30 provides the nearest thing to a chamber quartet I've yet to hear from a synthesised instrument.

The sustain range is adequate and the action very subtle — judicious twisting of the control will give an instant imitation of either an anechoic chamber or the Albert Hall. More careful adjustment will, however, give all the spaces in between! The Vibrato, I felt, could have become more modulatory but I guess there's a risk that the String Machine would then be looking to become a full-blown synthesizer rather than a remarkably good imitator.

Procession

So; a very welcome newcomer to the ranks of synthesised orchestral keyboards. The SS30 continues the seemingly never-ending procession of quality instruments from the Yamaha stable and should have little trouble in keeping its head above the water in the deep end.



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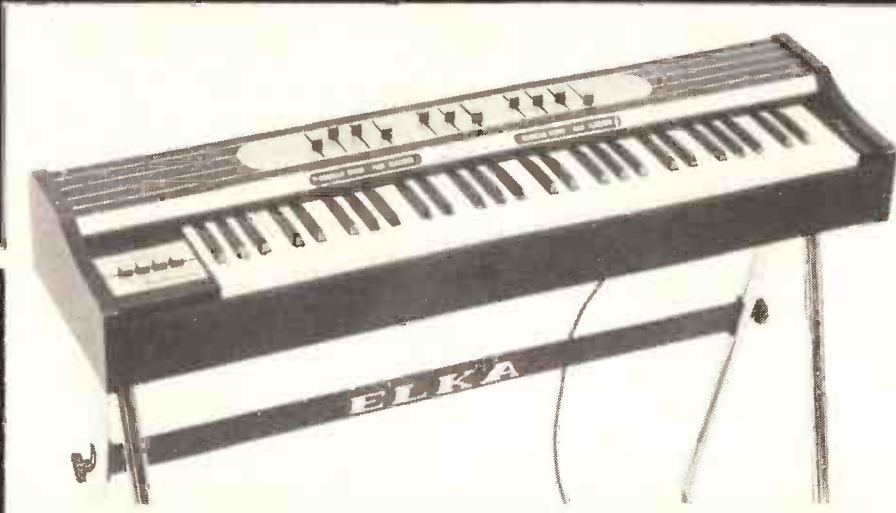
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9,5 - Gross Kg. 14



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HOHNER MG300M

Price: £209.75 inc. VAT

Reviewed by: Tom Stock

All right, hands up those of you who thought that Hohner guitars are put together by an army of 5 o'clock risers on the autobahns of Germany? Dumpkopf! Donner und Blitzen. Veré Ver you ven zey built ze factory, eh? Yes, you've guessed it already. If a 'copy' guitar is made anywhere in the world then it's got to come from Japan, and that's as true of Hohner as of those which either hide behind American sounding names, or come up with their own unpronounceable alternatives.

The guitar in question here is Hohner's £209.75 MG300M — I wish someone would clarify whether we're allowed to talk about copies etc — which 'tends to resemble' the Les Paul Custom in no uncertain way, at least at first glance. £209 is no little back pocket full of green ones, at least not for a guitar which appears to exist as a copy, rather than offer something a touch different. Bear in mind the last couple of issues we've reviewed Les Paul look-alikes costing many pounds less and ostensibly all we get here that's different is another pick-up.

Construction

Right, then, out with the magnifying glass and open with the ol' peepers then. The finish on the model I had for review was a rich red — very attractive — and there didn't appear to be any immediately identifiable faults with the construction. Body and neck are mahogany, and the fingerboard, complete with mandatory plastic position markers, is rosewood. The hardware is gold-plated, but it does look a bit on the cheap side: impossible to say why accurately, but that was the impression the axe gave me as it sat looking at the amplifier expectantly. 'Not yet' I told it!

The bridge, saddle, and each individual string can be raised and lowered by means of a combination of large, medium, and

small screwdrivers. Controls are simple: three volume (one for each p/u) and one tone control handling all three p/us. The P/u selector switch, situated — ah hell, you know where it is! — is marked rhythm and treble with the obligatory centre position which in this case operates all three pick ups at once.

Skinny

Strapping it on holds no fears — it's relatively light due mainly to one of its major (for us in the office) problems — the extreme thin-ness of the neck. Peter Douglas and I both have relatively small hands, and we both agreed that the Hohner's neck is too skinny for us. Indeed, it even looks skinny which leads me to worry about its long-term durability.

Even before plugging in another problem presented itself — the heel is damned uncomfortable — quite honestly I had little chance of playing comfortably above the 17th fret — above the 20th is just about impossible.

So, plug in and start playing. The action on this model was set up a touch on the ultra-fast and low side — I'd have preferred a slightly higher action but that's a matter



of taste. The finger-board is fast and the ultra-light strings supplied — not particularly pleasant but passable — bent admirably well. A set of heavier strings and a higher action would have endeared the guitar to me a little more.

Tuning heads work well but are a little on the high geared side — fine tuning is a delicate matter with these items, but it appeared to stay in tune well and I wouldn't worry about that aspect. If there is a brighter side to this otherwise middle of the road reaction, then it must lie in the sound that comes from the beast. Despite the provision of only one tone control, there are an amazing variety of colours available. In the 'treble' position you have the choice of treble only, or treble and middle p/u: in the middle position, all three-with the sound balanceable by means of the individual volume controls: and on rhythm, a choice of treble and bass p/u.

Circuitry

The tone control appeared a little wierd in its workings: from 0 to about 3 the tone is very mellow and warm, almost thick. Immediately you move the control the barest millimetre however above that then the treble pounces in with quite astonishing bite. However, from there on up there is hardly a difference in tone at all. I'm forced to wonder if this model might have been faulty somewhere in the tone circuitry department.

Experimentation

Still, this unexpected bucketfull of treble made me view the guitar differently: I particularly liked the p/u selector switch on 'rhythm' which gives bass and treble p/u with the volume of the treble higher than the bass, and full treble on the tone control. This setting provides a quite excellent and 'different' sound: plenty of bass end attack, hordes of screaming treble, and an unearthly gap where the middle hides between the two extremes. Most satisfying. Further experimentation revealed a host of different settings which could not be achieved on a two p/u guitar: although I'm not used to playing a 3 pick up job and hence found I had to make some adaptations to my plectrum style to avoid scraping across the top of the middle p/u.

Comparable

So, there we have it — a strange beast about which I'm not really able to commit myself. There are undoubtedly some errors in construction — the neck/body design is, to be kind, not very good at all and quite out of order for a guitar costing more than £200. On the other hand though, there is the sound itself — well worth going for, and comparable with guitars costing considerably more. All in all, I've an open mind on the subject, and would neither advise against it nor recommend it. That on this occasion, must be up to you.

CS-800

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INSTRUMENT REVIEW Guitars



ROLAND BOSS EFFECTS

Prices: See text
Reviewed by:
Peter Douglas

It's important not to see effects as Talent Boosters. They must do their job properly or they aren't worth having. And of course the manufacturers are aware of this demand for something that actually works rather than something that merely sounds "freaky". Brodr Jorgensen lent us six Boss effects units, neatly laid out on their demonstration board. Bearing in mind the prices (see below) Boss are competing at the professional end of the market. You can certainly buy units with the same names for less, but do they work as correctly and usefully as the Boss boxes? We shall see.

Certain features are common to all six of these little machines. The metal housings are all the same size and all uniformly tough. They look as though they would stand up to life on the road, and that's saying something. Each is colour coded; each is made to operate not by means of the usual click-switch on the top, but by means of a kind of pedal with a rubber top. Pressing this pedal down switches the electronics on or off and simultaneously lights an LED at the top. The latter indicates whether your battery is still working. And incidentally, there is only any drain on the battery when leads are connected to both input and output. A large ribbed screw can be whipped out to lift the pedal up and allow the battery to be charged.

All the units come with instructions, and all have rubber bases to ensure that they won't slide on stage. The initial impression was good. It was time to investigate each in detail. I strapped on my axe, plugged into the first unit and prepared to strike a power chord.....

GRAPHIC EQUALIZER GE-6 Price: £52.15 inc. VAT

Well, yes, not necessarily the best one to try out with a power chord! The six sliders operate at 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600 and 3200Hz, providing scope for cut or boost of 15dB. This is actually quite a lot of

variation, and if you aren't familiar with the operation of a graphic you're in danger of boosting the total output too much. The best use for such a unit is in a room whose acoustics ruin your normal sound, making it too bassy or too trebly, or perhaps losing the lot. You might, on the other hand, have a rather poor amp which you can't afford to replace. The graphic can help to improve its tone when used permanently with it. Thirdly, you might care to use it to enable your solos to cut through, without altering the natural sound of the instrument too much. As such it offers a more subtle alternative to the simple power booster.

You can't change the position of the sliders with your foot, but you shouldn't really have to. This is a good, unfussy little box which does its job. A man can ask for no more.

SPECTRUM SP-1 Price: £39 inc. VAT

Puzzle. What does it do? Is it working? Yes, it is working. It's just that the effect is subtle. There are two rotary knobs, one called "balance", the other "spectrum". If you play a chord and twiddle the spectrum control manually, you get a phased effect. The balance control simply adjusts the proportion of "normal" sound in the total signal. Brodr Jorgensen admitted that the effect is not dramatic, and said that it works best with bass. They also told us that "it grows on you." Maybe it does.

DISTORTION DS-1 Price: £36.41 inc. VAT

A sophisticated device with three rotary controls for your delight. The first is for level, then there's a tone control and one for adjusting the amount of distortion you actually want. The most welcome and least often seen feature is the tone knob, since this adds a whole further dimension to the kinds of fuzz you can get. By rolling off the treble you can dispense with some of the (inevitably) rather harsh, grating noise that



these effects always produce. A good box, since it covers the whole range of distortion, not just the nasty end.

PHASER PH-1 Price: £49 inc. VAT



Two knobs — one for rate, the other for depth. The immediate shortcoming that no amount of twiddling will make up for is the lack of depth. If you're paying nearly £50 for a phaser, it should be capable of everything from the slightest modulation to the most dramatic, swirling phase. Though I never had the opportunity to try one, I am informed that the older AP-2 phaser was somewhat better. What the PH-1 does, it does acceptably. There just isn't enough of it.



OVERDRIVE OD-1 Price: £39 inc. VAT

This is the "clean" version of the Distortion unit. In other words, what you get is sustain without the fuzz. It works best on single notes, the characteristic tone being super-smooth and pure. With chords it can't quite hold that smoothness, and the signal begins to break up. Two knobs here, one for level and one for overdrive. The OD-1 doesn't really do much, but is fine for producing a clear, authoritative soloing tone. Grit your teeth, twist your features into an expression of supreme anguish, throw yqu head back and try Oye Como Va.

TOUCH WAH TW-1

Price: £43.58

I've saved the best until last. This is the most impressive envelope follower unit I've yet encountered. For those who aren't familiar with the term, this is a device which "wah-wahs" the signal automatically, the wah being triggered by

the level of signal coming from your instrument. It takes a while to figure out the precise relationship between the "sensitivity" and "peak" controls, but in essence they vary the degree of attack required to trigger the wah sound. A small switch labelled "up" and "down" alters the direction of sweep, i.e., if you imagine a

traditional wah-wah pedal, down is from bass to treble and up is from treble to bass. The Touch Wah is superb — very funky indeed with a bass guitar.



Conclusions:

The construction and durability of these effects is faultless. They are attractive to look at and easy to operate. The pedal idea for switching in and out means that there is no loud click when changing over from, or back to, normal. I would, however, quibble with the use of the LED. Surely this could be adapted so that it stayed on when the unit is in operation. In this way it could still serve its current purpose as an indicator of the battery's condition. The signal-to-noise ratio for all the units is exceptionally good — it makes them perfect for studio use, where standards are that much higher. They are not cheap, but they seem to be reliable, and for the performing and recording musician, it's reliability that counts.

Coming next month:

Shergold double-neck
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INSTRUMENT REVIEW

Amplifiers



ACOUSTIC 126 BASS COMBO

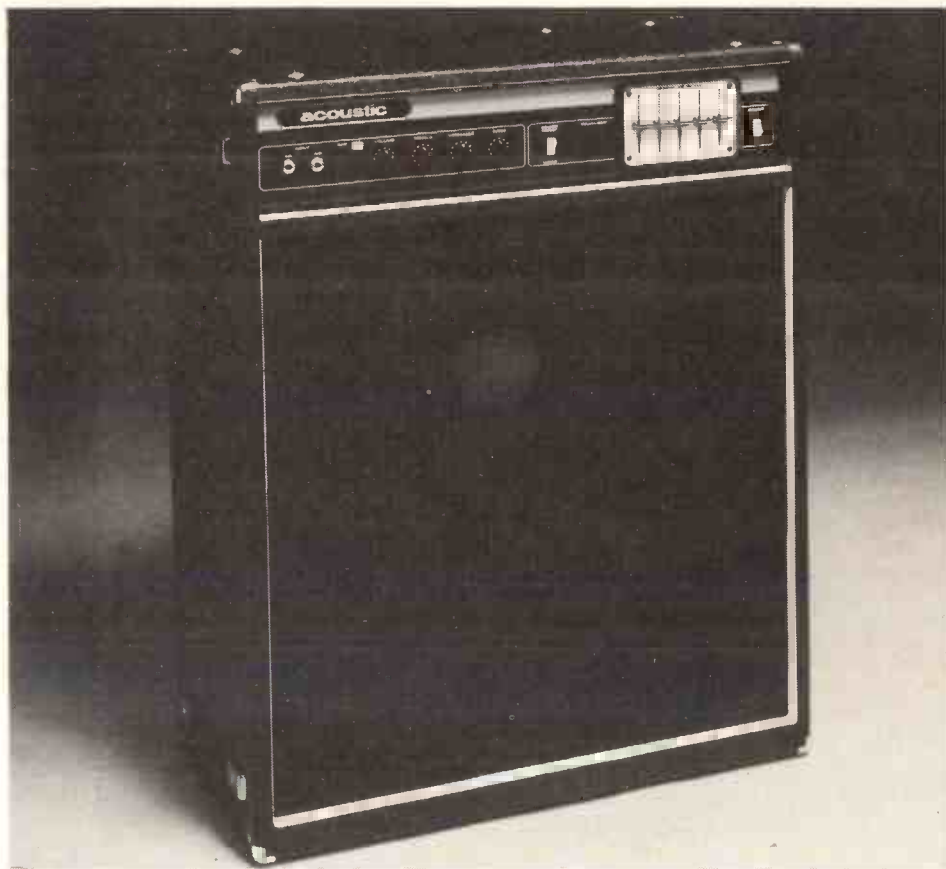
Price: £426 inc VAT

Reviewed by: Peter Douglas

For many years Acoustic bass amplification has been regarded with the same reverence as the Rickenbacker 4001 — it's the gear all aspiring bass players would like to own. That said, it seems to be less visible on the stages of Britain than on the other side of the Atlantic. It's possible that this is a result of the marketing policy of Acoustic U.S.A. — viz, to franchise individual retailers in the U.K. (of which there are twenty) rather than appoint a sole distributor who will supply everybody. This exclusive approach to supply means that the punter can't just drift into his local emporium and come out with a stack. He may have to travel quite a way. Is this fair? The retailers have grouped themselves together in a consortium which ensures that no-one else gets their hands on the goods.

Anyway, this particular item is a single channel, dual input 100 watt 1 x 15" model. It weighs a ton, but has a set of castors. The cabinet is front-loaded with a large port at the bottom — similar, in fact, to the Roland Studio Bass 100 combo we reviewed last year. The overall appearance immediately gives the impression of class and solidity. It doesn't try to be flash because it doesn't have to try. The front panel says it all: left to right we find the two inputs, one normal, the other with a lower impedance and thus better suited to guitars with weaker pick-ups. Next comes a bright switch, for extra crunch and "clickiness" in the sound, then volume, treble, mid and bass rotary controls. Next along is a power boost switch whose function is a) to increase volume and b) to cut down the high frequencies.

The graphic equalizer section is what really makes the Acoustic an attractive proposition, however. They were amongst the first to adopt the idea, and many have subsequently copied it. The advantage of a graphic are numerous; to re-cap, for those who can't quite see the point, a graphic's function is to offer a finer control over the tone of the amplifier. Those familiar with graphics come to recognise at a glance the tonal characteristics of a setting by the shape of the slider waveform. Flat res-



ponse, for example, is indicated by a flat line of sliders at the 0dB position. Cut at any given frequency is represented by a dip in the line, and boost by a rise.

Such a system only comes into its own, however, when you can switch it in and out. The idea, in other words, is to set the rotary controls to your satisfaction with the graphic set flat. You then arrange the graphic for the special setting (whatever that is) that you think will add punch for those special moments in the set when you emerge from the shadows at the back of the stage and surprise the audience by being briefly funky.

But as I say, this only really adds pizzazz when you can switch from "straight" sound to equalized sound. Unfortunately the 126 doesn't come with a footswitch, so you will have to spend extra on buying one. If used *without* a footswitch the graphic is automatically in operation all the time. The sliders operate at 70, 125, 350, 820 and 2000Hz, and an LED to the left of them indicates whether the section is on or off. The on/off switch for the amplifier is located on the far right.

So that's what you've got to play with, apart from various sockets on the back panel for the missing footswitch, for pre-amp out (for direct injection etc.) and for additional power or effects.

These days the general standard of guitars and basses is considerably higher than it once was, and hence a good amp is required to bring out the potential of whatever you're playing.

In the case of the Acoustic, the facilities are there for producing the more up-front sounds required by the modern bassist; this means that although you can get as much of the traditional woolly, thudding sound as

your heart desires, the bright switch and the graphic combine to bring out the treble end of the bass guitar. Hence I would recommend the 126 unreservedly for anybody playing in a funk band, or for any devotees of the Jean-Jacques Burnel treble growl. The amp's designers have responded to some of the recent trends in music by providing the range, and it's entirely up to you whether you use it all or not.

Likewise, every watt of the prescribed power output does its job. Volume on around three or four was more than enough to compete with drums and two 100 watt guitar amps in rehearsal, we found, and there was no hint, at that level, of distortion. The 15" speaker, by the way, is a Vega — which should tell you enough.

As we would expect, the Acoustic is built to take a beating on the road. The cabinet construction is faultless. It's good to see how much better this aspect of amp building has become over the last few years. There is full corner protection and, in addition to the castors, a pair of handles located on one side; on the opposite side are four metal feet. This is a thoughtful provision, since it means that you can put the amp down while it's being carried without scrunching up the cabinet cloth.

The 126, in conclusion, is a workmanlike combo which won't fill you with delirious excitement. The styling is neat, quiet and conservative, and since everything works exactly as it's meant to, there are few surprises. This, in other words, is just what any bass player could wish for. The price is not low, neither is it expensive. Considering the highly professional standards both set and achieved in the design, it's virtually a bargain. Five stars.

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INSTRUMENT REVIEW Guitars



IBANEZ ARTIST 2618

Price: £374.50 inc VAT,
case included.

Reviewed by. Peter Douglas



Anything from Ibanez these days has to be treated with respect, if only because of the price. They have left behind their reputation for cheap replicas, and for the last few years have concentrated on original designs that are both tasteful and thoughtful. The idea behind the Artist range seems to have been to produce an "instant classic". The quality of the components, the antique-type finish and the gold-plated hardware all point that way.

Perhaps the single most striking feature of Ibanez when they first started producing their own designs was the extra-powerful pick-ups. The typical tone of the Super 80's, which are the type featured on this model, is hard and bright, which naturally makes screaming sustain a cinch. This has the converse effect of making the guitar less useful for rhythm work. In any case, lead players are the people who will be most interested: there are 24 frets, and access to the very highest is easy. I was reminded of the Kawai tested last month — similar thinking has gone into both, though the details differ.

Screwed

When you actually get down to playing, the first thing you notice is the height of the frets. They stand pretty tall off the board, and this instantly demands a slight adaptation of playing technique — namely, the amount of pressure you place on the fingers of the left hand. Pressing down too hard results in a slightly sharpened note. This becomes increasingly marked the further you move up the neck, so extreme precision becomes a must. Now I personally found this a little disconcerting. For quite a while it seemed almost impossible to get the thing in tune. With practice it became easier, but I suspect that this might prove off-putting to the casual music-shop strummer. (Not you, Joe) I must also take issue with the siting of the top strap button — as indeed Pat Travers did with the Ibanez Pro 2681. It's screwed in right at the end of the top cutaway, and the effect of this is to make the guitar off-balance as it sits on the shoulder. What Travers did was to re-position this button down at the heel, where the neck joins the body.

Though the design is, as I've already said, generally conventional, the machines deserve special mention. They call them Velve-Tune, and their particular qualities are a) the double worm, which "eliminates play and lash" — in other words, stops them slipping, and b) the torque adjustment, which allows you to keep the heads as tight or loose as you want. I found the gearing a little too sharp, however, and would also have preferred gold-plated machine heads to the "pearloid" (expensive plastic) ones that these guitars now come with.

The bridge design is excellent. Not only is there a lot of room for adjustment, especially backward/forward adjustment, but the whole thing is connected with a sustain plate, which is set flush with the top of the guitar. This idea isn't new — Yamaha guitars have had sustain plates for a few years now, but it does help to coax

that extra little bit of raunch into the sound. The tailpiece seems *rock* solid enough for the manufacturers to name it (possibly tongue-in-cheek? Do the Japanese have a sense of humour? No surely not) the *Gibraltar*.

While we're discussing hardware, the four controls (two volume, two tone) are equally superb. Not only do they look nice and chunky and feel smooth to operate, but you are assured of getting them to turn at the flick of a fingertip thanks to the black serrated band around the middle of each. This is more important than it may sound; most adjustments to volume and tone are made in the middle of a piece of music, and hence have to be executed very quickly. For the same reason I would quibble with the position of the selector toggle. O.K., tradition (i.e. Gibson) dictates that the toggle should be at the top of the body. It's easier from the playing point of view, however, to have this nearer the playing hand. Personally I favour a point about 2" below the bridge.

The only piece of hardware I haven't mentioned yet is the nut, which is a "half and half" nut — half brass and half bone. Why? Because this apparently allows a more balanced sound between open and fretted notes. A good thought.

The materials used for the rest of the guitar can't be faulted. The body is solid mahogany with a carved maple top. The contours are smooth and aesthetically pleasing, the top arching nicely and the back hollowed slightly at the top end to fit the player. The neck is glued on and joined to the body with a flowing and almost invisible joint. Thus there is no "heel" as such, and where I have referred elsewhere to a "heel" I am merely indicating the place. This shaped area makes the guitar sit comfortable in the hand when you're playing above the twelfth fret, and is most welcome.

The fingerboard is ebony — not that cheap substitute used so frequently these days (a plastic called "ebonol") and the position dots are abalone. No expense has been spared. It makes the existence of those pearloid machine heads all the more lamentable!

And that's the guitar: very classy indeed, and if you want one you're going to have to pay for that class (for *enter this month's competition* . . . Ed.). The sound is pretty distinctive too, and my guess is that you'll either love it or hate it. Like other guitars with powerful pick-ups, the sound produced by the Ibanez is hard and trebly. If mellowness is what you need, it will be necessary to use the bass pick-up with the tone on about 5.

The biggest drawback with the 2618 is the fact that it takes so long to get used to. Even since starting to write this review I've revised my opinion several times, for and against. At first it impressed with its appearance, then it proved tricky to tune and to play. But once I had stretched the strings a little and discovered that a very light touch with the left hand is essential, it started to reveal its true potential. My advice to anyone interested in owning one of these guitars would be: spend time with it — and that means sitting in the shop for at least an hour, just playing and getting used to the action and the sound.

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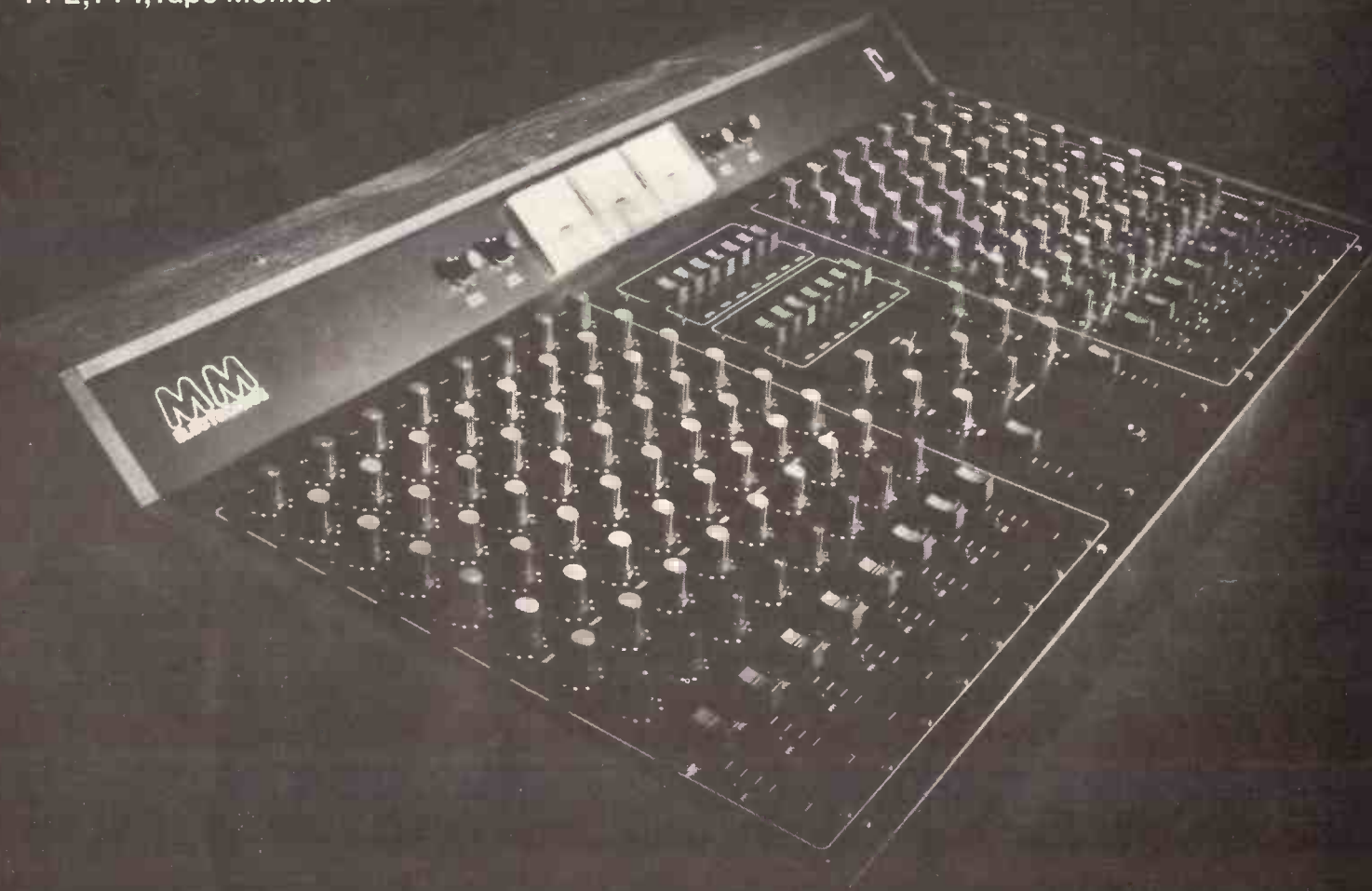
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Your chance to win one of ten guitars worth a total of £1445.00!!

This month we are giving away no less than TEN guitars to the lucky winners of our New Year competition. First prize is the Ibanez Artist guitar reviewed elsewhere in this issue; second prize — the Kawai KS 12XL; third is a Moridaira jumbo acoustic; and fourth is the Columbus 14R electric. Then there are SIX Chappell acoustics for the runners-up. But that's not all. In addition to their guitars, the winners will each receive two sets of Ernie Ball strings!

The total value of all the prizes works out at something in the region of £1,445. Not bad, eh?

If you fancy a stab at one of these goodies, all you have to do is take a gander at the How To Enter section below, list the items in the correct order, send off the reply card bound into this issue of BEAT, and Bob's yer uncle!

THE COMPETITION

There you are, standing in the music shop, nervously clutching your wallet. The assistant behind the counter is on the phone to his girlfriend, and has been for the last half-hour. You have definitely decided to select and buy one of the electric guitars on display, and thanks to the immobility of the assistant, you've got plenty of time to think about your choice. Obviously you want the best guitar you can afford, but what, apart from the consideration of price, should be your order of priorities? Having seen the guitar you *think* you want, what are the other most important considerations to be borne in mind?

- A) Appearance
- B) Ease of playing
- C) Quality of strings
- D) Type of woods used
- E) Easy to tune
- F) Likely to retain value
- G) Sound
- H) Hard case included
- I) Power of pick-ups
- J) Used by famous musicians

HOW TO ENTER

1. List the six most important features to be taken into consideration when buying a new electric guitar, in order, on the reply card. Indicate each by its LETTER (e.g. 1 — A).
2. Fill in the short questionnaire. Your answers to this have no bearing on the competition. It is there to help us improve the magazine and give better service to our readers.
3. Insert your name and address in BLOCK CAPITALS in the appropriate space.
4. Detach and post the card off to us — not forgetting a stamp — at BEAT INSTRUMENTAL COMPETITION, 1B PARKFIELD STREET, LONDON N1, to arrive no later than February 1st, 1979.
5. The result will be announced in the April 1979 issue of BEAT INSTRUMENTAL. No staff of Campillos Ltd. or their families or relatives are eligible to enter this competition. The judges' decision is final and binding and no correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.



1st prize: Ibanez Artist, 2nd: Kawai, 3rd: Moridaira, 4th Columbus + 6 acoustics + 20 sets of Ernie Balls!!!

IMPROVING YOUR GUITAR

Fret buzz, bad intonation, wonky action and wayward machines get a disapproving glare from GARY COOPER as he tells you how to get rid of them

One of the saddest sights in the world (for me at any rate) is to see a young guitarist walk into a music shop, dragging behind him a thoroughly ruined guitar. It's pretty easy to mess up your beloved Strat copy by ham-fisted ministrations with a screwdriver and pliers.

For the sake of this article let's take a fairly typical instrument as our first example, a Japanese Gibson copy (er, sorry Norlin, umm, let's say a Japanese instrument which looks remarkably like a Gibson). I'm sure that many BEAT readers will either own, want to own, or have owned such a guitar, so let's look directly at the sort of problems which you can encounter with this type of guitar.

The first problem which you are likely to run across with this sort of guitar (and I'm thinking here of the ubiquitous Les Paul replicas) is a high action. Now, (as many guitar players will tell you) a fairly high action can be quite an advantage. To start with it eliminates the possibility (on all but the most deranged neck!) of fret buzz. Secondly it makes for higher power as the strings are vibrating in a freer manner and thirdly it gives a purer sound. Nonetheless, for lightening fast runs and easy chord changes you might well want a low action.

On most guitars this is a relatively simple operation: you just turn two screws (one either side of the bridge) and down she

goes. Others (like many Fenders and their copies) have individual adjusters for each string. These systems work by having a saddle for each string, each saddle having two small screws at either end for raising and lowering the string in question.

Tackle

Now all this would be straightforward enough were it not for two associated problems. The first is that, as you lower your strings, you are likely to encounter fret buzz. The other is that your intonation may well require re-setting. Let's tackle fret-buzz first as, in some ways, it is the less serious of the two problems.

More often than not the major cause of fret buzz is worn strings (these can also cause intonation errors but more of that later). Before you start messing around with the action then at least try fitting a set of new strings. There are, however, worse causes of fret buzz. The most common is an action which is simply too low. If that is the case you'll have to take it back up a little. If you insist on having a fretless wonder though then you're going to have to look carefully down the neck of your axe (sighting it like an arrow) and checking for two flaws. The first is a fret (or frets) which stand proud of the others.

Sometimes, if you are a player of pronounced habits, you will find that certain areas of your guitar neck just haven't been used as much as others. Not for nothing are the first few frets of a guitar sometimes called 'farmer's corner'. If this is the case you can either have a complete re-fret or have the proud frets stoned down to an even height. One or two proud frets may be caused by them having been jolted out of their slots.

If you are careful, and this seems to be the case, you can try slackening your strings, moving them out of the way and gently tapping the fret (covered with a soft cloth, of course!) back into its slot. Use only a broad mallet for this and please use only light strokes with the back of the neck well supported!

For the record, the problem can be caused by having one fret marginally lower than the others which has the same affect as a proud one. Here the remedy is either replacement of the fret concerned or to rub down all the others to the same height. This is, in my opinion, not an operation which you should attempt unless you know what you're doing. Leave this to a professional, which is just what I would advise you to do with a re-fret.

Another cause of fret buzz is having a convex hump in the neck. The cure for this can be either an adjustment to the truss rod or even a new neck, if the warp is severe enough.

Contrary to popular opinion, a slight dip in the neck is normal and acceptable. Overtightening of the truss rod will snap or permanently damage the neck and on no account should you attempt to use the truss rod yourself, even if those damned Japs try to look flash by giving away allen keys with their guitars!

Charlie

Other causes of fret buzz can be an inaccurate slot depth in the bridge or the same fault in the nut. You can undertake minor adjustments to bridge saddle slot depths but I'm inclined, these days, to feel that one of the American imported substitute bridges might be a better bet. Quite frequently they will not only alleviate the problem of slot depth but also increase sustain considerably. A point to watch here though is that many Japanese copies are perfect in almost every respect

except string spacing. Quite often they put the strings too close together (for tiny yellow fingers, one wonders?) and, very frequently, far too close to the edge of the neck on the top 'E' string. This makes you look a right Charlie when you fall off the edge of the neck in mid solo! Fitting a substitute bridge may help but don't necessarily assume that your Les Paul copy will take a bridge designed for the real thing. It may well not and, furthermore, there might be a disagreement between the saddles and the nut as to where the strings should be!

Still on fret buzz (who said a repairman had an easy lot — all this is just about fret buzz!) you can also find that too deep a slot in the nut will allow the string to vibrate against the first fret.

The remedy here is a new nut and I'd plump for either an ivory one or a brass replacement (again, giving increased sustain). Replacement should be undertaken by a repairman not an amateur. As most cheap guitars use plastic nuts then almost any copy (and any top price models!) will be improved by having a new nut.

Now we come to that other bogey of guitar players — intonation problems. Let me say here and now that I don't think there is a certain sure-fire correction for all intonation problems. In the course of my interviewing top guitar players over the past few years I've lost count of the number of complaints I've heard about this trouble. Some guitarists I know have virtually re-built their guitars, fitting new bridges, new nuts, new frets, new tailpieces, having necks shimmed, adjusted, almost anything to get the guitar to play in tune at all fret positions. The trouble is that some people have very sensitive ears and will never be satisfied by the compromise that any guitar must be by its very nature.

Still, let's assume that you don't have a pair of ears like a Korg mini-tuner (essential purchase No. 1 by the way!). The problem usually manifests with chords. You tune up to get a nice open chord, perfectly in tune, take it up the neck and find that you're way out by the time you get past the fifth fret. Hands up any reader that's ever had that problem.

Yes, intonation problems are universal. Almost every guitar suffers from them at some time or another. Step one is to throw your strings away before doing anything else. Incorrectly wrapped strings are a major cause of failure to play in tune

and I have sat in a dressing room with a *very* well known guitar player (whose name I shan't mention as he endorses a major brand) going through a whole box trying to find one string in a batch that would play correctly. Having fitted new strings and still having found the same problem you are now left with having to adjust string length via the bridge saddle adjusters.

Many guitars are fitted with bridges that let you adjust forward and backward movements of the saddles. What you are doing, in effect, is compensating for the amount which you raise the pitch of a string by actually depressing it when you hold down a note.

The formula for this adjustment has been repeated many times but, for the sake of completeness, here it is once more. Sound a harmonic over the 12th fret. Now play a note at that fret position. If there is a difference between the pitch of the two then note whether the fretted note is flatter (lower) or sharper (higher). If the fretted note is flatter than the harmonic then the string length is too long and you should shorten this by moving the saddle in towards the direction of the nut. If the fretted note is sharper than the harmonic then lengthen the string by taking the bridge piece back, towards the tail piece.

String length is not the sole cause of intonation problems, however. Warped necks and incorrect neck angles can cause similar problems. The only serious cure here is to have the guitar examined by an expert. Once again, you *could* tackle truss rod adjustments yourself, you could shim a neck (altering the angle of entry to the body) or turn the screws of your Strat's neck adjuster — you *could* also end up with a junked guitar, so don't do it!

Feedback

You'd be surprised how much of a power increase you can get on some instruments by adjusting pole pieces up towards the string. On guitars which feature this adjustment potential it's worth trying but do watch out for strings which touch the pole pieces or, equally possibly, induce feedback. Humbucking pickups work by the second coil being wound in the opposite direction to the first, this tends to cancel out the hum of the first. Single coil pickups (a la Fender Strat) don't offer this advantage but

do at least offer a reasonably high treble potential which some players prefer.

Lately, there has been an increasing number of replacement pickups appearing on the market, each claiming to be 'hotter' than the next. The actual concept of 'hotness' merely refers to the output of the pickups and this is usually achieved by simply increasing the windings of the coil or (in the case of humbucking types) coils, plural.

An increasing number of guitarists are junking their original pickups in favour of Di Marzios, Mighty Mites and others, quite often with exceptional results. Glen Tipton, guitarist with Judas Priest, recently spent the best part of half an hour bending my ear about the improvements to his Strat which he has made with Di Marzios and, quite evidently,

more sense to ditch your guitar and buy a better one with good pickups fitted as standard. If you happen to have a cheap instrument which you've set up and generally worked on to your satisfaction it can be worth considering, though. One fact which readers might not be aware of is that you can now buy a range of pickups direct from Gibson. These start from about £31 for an original Humbucker up to £59.50 for a Jazz pickup.

Possibly the instrument which benefits most from these pickups is the Strat copy. Often these are fitted with tinny, weak pickups and can benefit enormously from a set of Di Marzios. Les Paul's and their copies can be fitted with Di Marzios which, with the flick of a switch, convert from twin coil (Gibson type) sounds to single coil operation. Very useful



Only use light strokes with the back of the neck well supported

there is a lot to be said for replacing pickups.

In the early days of Japanese guitars it was often said that while they offered excellent value in terms of woodworking quality and playability, they were frequently extremely weak in the electronic department. Whilst this is certainly no longer true of the Ibanez, Antoria, Aria, Yamaha ranges (and some others, of course) there are still cheap Japanese and generally Oriental instruments which are weak in the output department. Fitting a pair of Di Marzio Dual Sounds at £31.95 a pair can make a lot of sense, although some might feel that it makes

facility that. With copies, however, you may have to watch the string spacing and a new bridge and nut may be advisable.

If you actually *enjoy* the work we've been talking about, you can pick up a cheap secondhand Jap copy, set the action low, have the frets stoned and fit new machines and pickups. The result can be remarkable *but*, by the time you've paid for a brass bridge and nut, new pickups and switches etc., etc., you may well have better off buying something like a new Aria (which seem to retail at well below their true value).

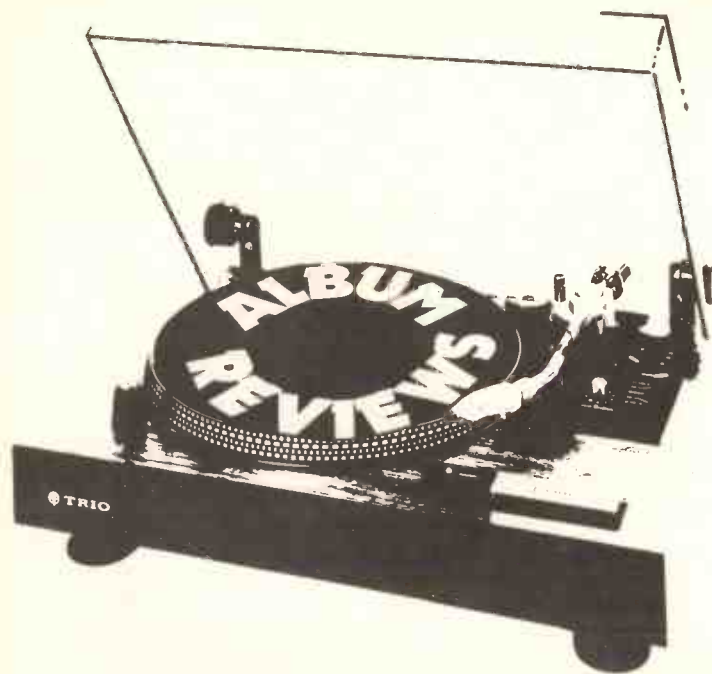
So, with a bit of care, you can certainly make minor improvements to your guitar and there's really only one field which we've so far ignored, machines. These days the top Japs, and nearly all Americans, come with good quality machines that don't slip. For those of you who want to change machines on a worn guitar then stick either with manufacturer's spares or change the whole set for Schallers which are, to my mind, still the best you can buy, although Grovers have their adherents.

Having, hopefully, answered a few questions which may have been lurking at the back of your mind, there are a few general points I'd like to make before closing. One concerns having guitars re-fretted by repairmen. Many experienced Fender players have found that their axes benefit from having Gibson frets fitted when re-fret time comes around. The reason for this is that Gibson frets are fatter and provide more sustain. It's a tip I learned from Laurie Wisefield of Wishbone Ash (probably the best Fender player, apart from Beck, I've ever heard). He has his Fenders re-fretted that way and claims that it makes a great difference. True, fatter frets never offer theoretically the same precision of intonation as thinner ones, but the difference is just a theory and the sustain seems better. My own vintage Jaguar has Gibson frets and hangs on like a BEAT reporter at a bar with free beer!

Clot

Another tip is, according to some buffs, leaving the back of necks unvarnished when they have been re-fretted. Apparently this can give an improvement in tonal qualities but it's not something I've ever had occasion to check for myself. The final point is to choose your repairmen carefully. More than one fine instrument has been ruined by a ham-fisted clot with a hammer and a big head. Ask around and establish credentials before you hand your axe over.

Golden rules are, reputedly, for the breaking, but you *can* tackle minor problems yourself. Where the rule *should* be inflexible is when it states that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Remember that and you won't go too far wrong!



WHITE HOT



LENNY WHITE STREAMLINE ELEKTRA K 52108

Having previously assumed that Lenny White's solo albums would be masterpieces because he is one of the best drummers in the world, and finding that this was not, in fact, the case, all the more reason for a quick burst of delirium on discovering that Streamline is a funky beast with Lenny in his element. This is toe-tapper mean-and-nasty-commercial-funk all the way: heavily plucked, trebly bass, squealing keyboards, riffy, chunky and/or soaring lead guitar with Lenny pumping out his ear-tangling rhythms behind it all.

The band, in various combinations, comprises Nick Moroch and Jamie Glaser on guitars, Donald Blackman and

Denzil Miller on keyboards, and Marcus Miller on bass, with a very welcome appearance by Chaka Khan on Lady Madonna. The track titles sprinkle a few hints in advance; Struttin', 12 Bars From Mars, Pooh Bear, and the way that the soloists on each are billed opposite further indicates that crisp and very much to the point renditions will be coming your way.

And so they do. Struttin' steams, and so does Glaser's workout halfway through. Lady Madonna puts the Beatles through the Funky Chopper, and once Chaka has dispensed with the words the gymnastics commence. 12 Bars From Mars will become the Lenny White track to play to people who don't understand. It revolves around a savage guitar riff, followed each time round by the definitive Lenny White riposte. He's not there when you anticipate the beat and tap your knee; he is when you stop to wonder what he did with it.

And that (he preached) is why Lenny White is the main man. Anyone who can turn jazz rock funk or whatever you want to call it — generally a most predictable format — into a bag of clever surprises is doing well. He also does well by underplaying instead of overplaying his hand. There isn't actually a substantial drum solo anywhere on the record, fr'instance.

When, on Time, he takes a little section to mix it with just the bass, he underlines the benefits of just hugging the groove instead of battering his way over the top — as Cobham is occasionally prone to do. For

the sake of variety he slows things down on I'll See You Soon and for the first time on the album things become mediocre.

Finally, a quick nota bene for any punks who might still be reading this. (*Unlikely — Ed*) When you've got five seconds to spare, listen to Spazmo Strikes Again.

C.S.

AMBROSIA LIFE BEYOND L.A. WARNER BROS. 56525

I've been waiting two years for this album, the third by a band no-one in England has ever heard of. Which is not merely surprising but astonishing. Ambrosia possess a subtlety and maturity we hardly expect these days when bands like Foreigner and Boston dominate the American charts. Still, perhaps the move from 20th Century Records to the mighty Warner empire will open up some previously closed doors. The hardest door to open is bound to be the inherent prejudice of the average Briton when it comes to music. Still, there's not much you can do about that except to thrust a copy of Life Beyond L.A. into his hands and scream "Listen to this, cloth ears!"

The press blurb informs us that this is their most accessible album to date. This is possibly true, but accessibility is a two-edged sword. In most cases it means that the band in question have surrendered what tiny grains of originality they once possessed and gone straight to where the cash is: boring and derivative stuff that has been scientifically calculated to appeal to 63.5% of social groups B and C aged between 13 and 28.

In the case of Ambrosia it means that they have pared down their wide, almost symphonic arrangements to the basics. The huge orchestrations and bold stylistic experiments that made Somewhere I've Never Travelled so remarkable have been ditched, and although the tunes are equally complex they are being played by a rock band rather than the Los Angeles Philharmonic. But David Pack (guitar) and Joe Puerta (bass) have always favoured the broad canvas; their music sounds important without sounding pompous, and from the purely instrumental point of view, it works well with or without the violins.

Since the last album keyboard player Christopher North has left, though he contributes to two tracks. Joe Sample and David Cutler Lewis fill in on the



rest, Sample playing some very tasty piano on Apothecary.

If its accessibility you're after, try How Much I Feel, the last track on Side One, a mid-paced soul ballad so classy that it makes Hall & Oates sound like AC/DC. The title track proves that they are also capable of hitting hard, with its infectious synthesizer riff and urgent vocal; generally, though, the mood is one of quiet power. Anyone interested in hearing a more rock orientated album is directed back to their first, which for all the beauty and atmosphere of this, remains their best.

So far I've tried to avoid having to thrust Ambrosia into a musical category. They don't fit any of them, though it was inevitable that How Much I Feel would be described as blue-eyed soul by the record company. Like all real music theirs begins and ends with the melody. Once you've got that, you can call it jazz, soul rock, classical — anything you like. I call it music.

P.D.

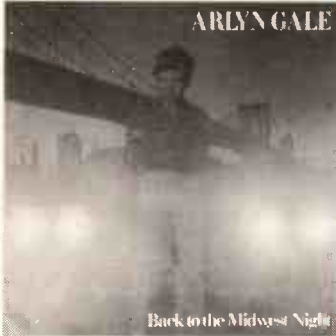
ARLYN GALE BACK TO THE MIDWEST NIGHT

ANCHOR ABCL 5261

Debut albums are always especially difficult to review — it's always so much more convenient to compare latest products with earlier efforts and search for improvements/additions/defects etc. With a debut album, that crime is increased. Faced with no precedent, the reviewer is herded into the categorisation trap, comparison with other artists taking the place of reference to previous product. (There, that's got the excuses over with!)

Anyway, Back to the Midwest Night is the debut album from a fella called Arlyn Gale, and it must rank as the best debut I've heard this year. It has many of the cliché debut requirements, but it leaves you believing you've known it for years. The accompanying press release does me the favour of drawing the first comparison —

Bruce Springsteen. It also, however, says that it's "pure coincidence" that Arlyn Gale's manager is Mike Appel, "the man responsible for helping Springsteen to superstardom". In fact, the comparison is not outrageous. Gale's voice, harsh and gruff, is the star of the platter — reminiscent even of John Kay's but, perhaps rightly, I have difficulty in placing it.



The music all moves along — this isn't breathless rock, but neither has it any of the laid-back sleepiness which I'm reputed to enjoy later in the evening! The accompanying band is hardly credited, but the drummer/bass combination is one of the tightest I've heard for a hell of a long time, and Gale himself is no useless axe-man, seeming to have been bred on a curious mixture of the over-enthusiasm of Southern boogie tempered by the sparseness of the blues.

The songs themselves are probably the weakest point, coupled with an excess of backing instrumentals with no lead direction — the title track is the most memorable with 'She's Alright' with its funky rhythm a close second.

Good though, very American, and a terrific debut.

T.S.

**BRIAN ENO
MUSIC FOR FILMS
POLYDOR 2310 623**

Car chases and gunfights? James Bond skiing down a glacier pursued by seventy armed guards with machine guns? The incredible journey, filmed by Disney, of two unlikely but loveable companions (a snake and an Orang-Utan) across the wastes of northern Canada?

Er, no. Brian doesn't go to see films like that. Exactly what sort of films he does go to see, however, is something of a mystery. European rather than American, I should say. The scenes he conjures up in the mind's eye are wild, eerie landscapes, rolling fog, half-formed shapes looming out of the darkness and then

disappearing; or perhaps the mating ritual of two bird-eating spiders observed by moonlight in some jungle clearing; or else the strange fantasies of an astronaut stranded, without food or oxygen, on a planet somewhere in the Andromeda Nebula (Yes yes, very picturesque — get on with the review... Ed).

Some of the music on this album has apparently been used on film soundtracks, but the majority is made up of "fragments of my recorded work over the last two or three years." Eno's work with David Bowie is recalled; much of it is similar to the kind of music used for *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, and to the synthesizer pieces on *Low* and *Heroes*. The mood is gloomy, full of expectant hushes and small, uncertain noises. It's possible to see what he had in mind with some of the titles: *Inland Sea*, *Events In Dense Fog*, *Patrolling Wire Borders*, etc. Others are more enigmatic: *M386*, *Two Rapid Formations*, *Alternative 3*. Make of them what you will.

There are no less than eighteen tracks on the album, all making up in atmosphere what they lack in length. It isn't the sort of music to put on at a party, unless your intention is to make everyone feel uncomfortable. Eno is interested in Muzak — music which is not listened to, but which provides an unconscious background to whatever is going on. Hence, bright, cheerful Muzak in supermarkets is designed to defuse the housewife's anxiety about spending money; in factories it is designed to patter along briskly in order to make people work harder; over the PA system after football matches it is intended to soothe aggression.

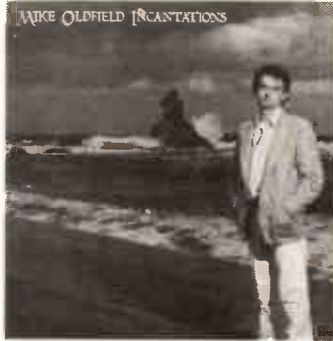
In other words, music can be used to manipulate people without them realising it. So why do they play *Tubular Bells* in lifts? What are they trying to do to us? (Exit screaming, escorted by men in white coats).

P.D.

**MIKE OLDFIELD
INCANTATIONS
VIRGINS VDT101**

The man who single-handedly and languidly tore down the barriers between creative rock and the seemingly uninhabitable wilds of pseudo-artistic symphonia has had a hair cut, relieved the green light from Virgin to make it a double, and done it again. What precisely he has done is not immediately so apparent. Incantations are "magical chants" hence the presence of

sister Sally and a preponderance of melodies which might have done the rounds in the court of Henry VIII. It spreadeth thinneth over ye four sidees. And because Oldfield as the overdubber to beat them all must by definition work from a similar *modus operandi* on each album, he runs a greater risk of repeating himself somewhere: a particular solo perhaps or the well hidden backing track which he must have started with and composed as being ideal to support all the extras.



Side one starts as casually as you would expect with three and a half more sides to fill before words like tubular and bells start edging in the consciousness — 'reminiscent of' department. Side two is where the incanting sets in; Mike gets to the point a little more quickly while Sally gets to grips with the chanting of the dirge. This is dolorous stuff, lacking the inspiration which took *Bells* into every household. That's the problem with his material, you see; to keep flowing over two or four sides the central idea has to be strong and all the extras have to be strong. It must all be strong; a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

On the third side, at last, he rolls up his sleeves to wind the piece up to a burst of the nearest he can come to riffing, as per usual pre-finale almost producing a jig to begin with and returning to it later on. Side four is also more guitar based; this really is a facet of his instrumental talent he should work on more (and one which would certainly not be incompatible with the huge sweep of his appeal). By the same token, as soon as he becomes too matey with a riff it is likely to be because they are familiar parts of his subconscious past.

Incantations isn't dross. It is merely an average Mike Oldfield platter which doesn't quite stretch worthily over the four sides. Now sit back and watch it bullet up the charts.

C.S.

Strumbug

**THE CLASH
GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE
CBS 82431**

In which the media counter-heroes energise/destroy any remaining concept that PUNK ROCK (heh heh) is here to stay — they ARE the culture embodied symbiotically and zeitgeist-wise vis à vis modern yooof (sic) and render *totally irrelevant* the pathetic wimp arrogance bank-balanced mindless bland soppy nastiness of longhair bop maaaaaan an' all that late sixties Woodstock head-shaking dandruff brain-rot meaninglessness in an on-going situation of Hiroshima-style proportions. Cool.



Check the manacing/contemptuous slashing razor-sharp guitar of Mick Jones, the hammer-hard gonzo (almost) but essentially *rock and roll* on-the-beat stix-work of Nicky Headon, the shell-shocked (but incredibly, immensely, dementedly TOGETHER) bass playing of Paul Simonon. But check too if you know what-the-hell's-good-for-ya the anti-God stance of than man Strummer. Pygmy amongst giants, skeleton in all our closets, he is nonetheless *there*. He can stand the heat and he ain't gonna get outa no goddam kitchen, bro.

Oppression and revolution OK culture symbols and yeh everyone's on the bandwagon of radical chic posing sure sure I know I started it all for Christ's sake but this platter turns the whole shebang on its head and throttles the lifeless corpse back to life, forces, by sheer injections of manic energy, the few pathetic life-sparks left in this short-lived art-form we once called rock and roll. Jeez, this is *real* — the white man in the Hammersmith Palais, the kid on the streets (maaaaaaan), the nigger in the gutter and I don't mean no dreadlock holiday for some expense account tax-exiled rock'n'roll white boy capitalist.

Actually the Clash stink and so does this record.

P.D.



**STEELY DAN
GREATEST HITS
ABCD 616**

I normally hate 'Greatest Hits' albums. They present a band as all good and no dung, all highs and no lows, no middle ground even. However, I've always liked the Dan, but never been able to listen to whole platters without coming to the conclusion that there's a fair amount of driftwood which clings to the ship slowing its progress down considerably and thus a compilation of Steely Dan's brighter moments is a welcome sight.

In fact, it's damn near magic — there are titles from all their albums since '72: Can't Buy a Thrill, Countdown to Ecstasy, Pretzel Logic, Kati Lied, The Royal Scam, and Aja. Of cour-



"Looks like another slag-off"

se, any sod could be let loose in the Dan's back catalogue and come up with a collection of crap — and, let's face it, in their wilder moments Becker and Fagen are as capable of the ordinary as the next man. There are thanks given to a total of 65 people on the sleeve, plus another 20 to whom the Dan are



"much obliged to", but no one seems to be credited with putting this package together, which seems a crying shame 'cos he's the guy that should be getting the Purple Heart (although he'd probably taken a few before making his choice!)

Track listing is: Do It Again, Reeling In The Years; My Old School, Bodhisattva (side 1); Show Biz Kids, East St. Louis Toodle-oo, Rikki Don't Lose That Number, Pretzel Logic, Any Major Dude (side 2); Hear At The Western World, Black Friday, Bad Sneakers, Doctor Wux, Haitian Divorce (side 3); Kid Charlemagne, The Fez, Peg and Josie (side 4). There is, I reckon you'll agree, something for everyone in that little lot. The highspot for yours truly is the excellently generous selection from Pretzel Logic ... great stuff this, a thoughtful Greatest Hits for once, but why the hell call it that? What is a hit? Have Steely Dan ever had one anyway? Never mind, good definitive Dan which would have made an ace Xmas present ... still, it's something to use that auntie's record token for — do people still talk about records?

T.S.



"Naw, it's OK over here"

**BRECKER BROTHERS
HEAVY METAL BE-BOP
ARISTA SPART 1070**

The track receiving airplay at the time of writing is perhaps the least typical and least satisfying on the album. East River is like a sledgehammer blow on the back of the neck, a hard funk riff that will go down well in the disco's. As it happens, Heavy Metal Be-Bop is more of a jazz album than anything else. They gently lead you into the more complex stuff as the album goes on: Inside Out is a modified 12-bar with a boogie beat, but the solos by brothers Randy (trumpet) and Michael (sax) are pure jazz. The nucleus of the band consists of former Zappa percussionist Terry Bozzio, bassist Neil Jason and guitarist Barry Finnerty, though numerous friends crowded in to shout and clap on



East River. Their playing is slick and flashy, but *hard* too; this isn't a relaxed slumped-over-the-bar-at-2 a.m. type of jazz. There's a lot of show-off soloing from the brothers themselves and by Finnerty. Sometimes it comes over too frenzied, as on Sponge, which opens Side Two, and at other times it's sweet and tasteful as on Michael Brecker's Funky Sea, Funky Dew. Here, as elsewhere, some pretty free use is made of effects — wah wah and octave dividers sound wierd with wind instruments, but that's because we're not used to hearing anything but the unadulterated sound of sax and trumpet.

The chief criticism to be made of this album is its occasional crudeness. If the solos go over the top now and again, however, it's because they're spontaneous. The bulk of Heavy Metal Be-Bop was recorded live at a club in Long Island. From this standpoint the recording is of excellent quality. In fact the time seems at last to have come when it is possible to obtain a standard of live recording as close as dammit to studio standard. The only instrument which lacks crispness is the drum kit — which as any engineer knows is always the hardest sound to get.

Yea, be-bop combined with heavy metal. Over to you, Tony lommi ...

P.D.



**BOB MARLEY AND THE
WAILERS
BABYLON BY BUS
ISLAND ISLD 11**

This is a live double album, and the very first thing you must therefore bear in mind is the fact

that Marley already cut his definitive live album a few years ago at the Lyceum. Since then Marley has become the prophet of reggae, the shining figure at the end of the commercial trail trodden by those who don't otherwise know or care much about reggae. His growing stature has, almost inevitably, coincided with a decline in his musical output — or, if not a decline, at least a series of aimless sideways steps. Kaya, laid back and wasted even by the standards of Rasta's herb king, was merely a whistle stop en route to Babylon which, like many a live double before it, is the ultimate in marking time with guaranteed sales in the background.

Guaranteed because most of the Marley tracks are on here: Exodus, Jamming, Punky Reggae Party and Kinky Reggae (the only track which overlaps with the Lyceum numbers) and because even lacklustre performances — and many of them are — in the reggae idiom are easier to take than, say, a duff jazz rock number, simply because reggae by definition is a wasted, laid back pattern of choppy riddims. It is also interesting to note where the album was recorded; assorted unspecified (why?) venues in Paris, Copenhagen, London and Amsterdam. London is curious indeed, as he didn't play London during his tour of '78 owing to the amount of aggro which had accompanied his previous dates in the capitol. Either the London tapes are over a year old — surely not — or what London really means is the barn he played instead in darkest Stafford. So who wants a Marley stopgap for Christmas? Probably plenty of people, and just wait until they see that natty natty sleeve.

C.S.

SHORT CUTS

**THE JAM
ALL MOD CONS
POLYDOR POLD 5008**

Was going to review this in full, but the album doesn't really merit it. It's time The Jam grew up and abandoned the role of sulky adolescents in favour of improving the music. Half the songs on this album are good, half are pretty damned bad. Someone needs to take Paul Weller and show him what he's doing right and what he's doing wrong, since what undermines the music is a lack of self-discipline.

CLASS OF '78 at 33 1/3

TOM STOCK...

At number 10 **Steve Hackett's** *Please Don't Touch* (Charisma) — a delightfully restrained solo album which sees all those concerned involved and because it was ace to hear Richie Havens in a semi-orchestral context! Number 9 *Kaya* (Island) I'm not a reggae fan, but **Marley and Wailers** put it across in such a relaxed manner that the monotony of the rhythm becomes euphoric, and each varying melody or solo inter-just a part of the whole: each song wriggles into the next to form a consummated marriage.

The first gigantic dinosaur superstar to make an appearance runs into platform eight with his first solo album. **Dave Gilmour** (Harvest) produced a thoughtful solo project which, whilst not denying its ancestry, has enough of his own personality to withstand the critic's onslaught. **Joan Armatrading's** fifth album, *To The Limit* (A&M), occupies the seventh slot on the ladder. Her melodies and mixed rhythms ensure her a rating before her intricately delicate lyrics are even taken into account. "Am I Blue For You" receives my wholehearted recommendation as the very best individual song of the year, and guitarist **Phil Palmer's** solo contribution to that song as the 'best' musical line of the year:

OK let's be predictable and include the first American — **Tom Petty** and his 'You're Gonna Get It.' (Shelter). This ain't as good as his debut album of '77 but even so, it's a strong collection of no compromise simple rock, tighter than ever.

The air starts to get thin as we reach the fifth place occupied by that extraordinarily loose-knit bunch of English folkies **The Albion Band** led by the stalwart **Ashley Hutchings**. 'Rise Up Like The Sun' (Harvest) is the definitive folk rock album, surpassing the legendary **Leige and Lief**. Everyone who is anyone on that scene makes an appearance somewhere on the two sides, but the welding together is what makes the record work. It's a comprehensive documentary of the English folk melody in the modern idiom.

Bob Dylan at number 4 with *Street Legal* (CBS) is my next choice — heavily influenced by the sheer genius of his **Earls Court** gigs. *Street Legal* sees the **Zim** back at his **John Wesley Harding** best and that's no bad thing. The medal section sees **Dylan** back again in a secondary role in the three album boxed set *The Last Waltz* (Warner) by **The Band**. A selection of superstars in the American tradition has yet to be put together to surpass this set, but the accolade is awarded to the **Band** themselves for, despite the class of their guests, dominating the collection.

Yes folks, it's Number 2 time and the perennial **Neil Young** (Warner) makes a game bid for the top but just falls short — not because *Comes a Time* isn't his best album for eight years, but because it's just not the best album ever which I think the man is capable of making.

CHRIS SIMMONDS...

Waving the new wave movement aside with a regal sweep of the hand as an enormous and largely talentless con-trick, the fact that very little music of real class has come out of Britain this year becomes all the more apparent. Too bad the class these days comes from established (boring) American bands; too bad, therefore, that most of my top ten spins come from the States.

Lenny White's *Streamline* (Elektra) is number one. The man is one of the best drummers in the world and proves it by never smacking his whole trick down on the table; more to the point, *Streamline* draws as concise a picture of advanced funky jazz rock as nothing has since *Blow By Blow* — unlike *White's* previous solo efforts.

Is it cheating putting **Joni Mitchell's** *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (Asylum) firmly in the number two position, bearing in mind that it was likely to be a classic, as most of hers are, before it was ever released? The album is a little short for a double, but **Jaco Pastorius's** bass playing gives the perfect excuse to include it on an instrumental level as well as the usual emotional one associated with **Joni Mitchell**.

Even more established (boring) is **Santana's** *Inner Secrets* (CBS), an already widely slagged bit of class that cooks, smokes and smoulders all the way. **Santana** are not past it.

B.B. King's *Midnight Believer* (ABC) still spends a lot of time on the turntable. It is not classic blues in the strict sense but the combination of **Lucille** with the **Crusaders** worked out very well. The **Crusaders**, meanwhile, just missed the boat with *Images* — and that's why **Joe Sample's** *Rainbow Seeker* (ABC) is a worthy representative for the year. A good keyboard album.

Joan Armatrading's *To The Limit* (A&M) might appear in someone else's list but is worth another mention as the build-up of her previous albums finally gelled properly here through a combination of good songwriting and fine back-up.

Johnny Winter's search for his roots has been a pleasant journey and *White, Hot & Blue* (Sky) ran the perfect bridge between the ethnic twelve-bar formations and the proper way to render them in the electric idiom. There'll be room at home for this one when the toes get itchy.

One more established (boring) contender is **Robin Trower's** *Caravan To Midnight* (Chrysalis). This is a very mellow platter and might knock a few prejudices out of the window.

Another slight cop-out is **Little Feat's** *live Waiting For Columbus* (Warner) but it's all there so what can you do 'sides boogie?

To underline the absence of recent home-grown quality, I'll share the last slot between **John Mayall** (Decca) and **Fleetwood Mac's** *Man Of The World* (CBS) as **British Blues** in its heyday is still very easy on the ears.

PETER DOUGLAS...

Reviewing is a very subjective business. You always think you have perfectly good reasons for liking (or loathing) anything — people, food, books, films, records. But when it comes down to it, a review says more about the reviewer than the record. So it's soul-baring time, and I still rate **Steve Hackett's** *Please Don't Touch* (Charisma) as the best of the year's LP's, from every angle — musically, instrumentally, lyrically. **Steve's** time is yet to come, despite his slightly disappointing live appearances at the end of October.

Right behind come **Ambrosia** with *Life Beyond L.A.* (Warner) which is reviewed in full near here. I won't, therefore, say much extra about it, except that **Ambrosia** have that rare genius with melody that sends a delightfully decadent *frisson* down the spine. Number three, pop pickers, was not an easy one to choose, with both **10cc** and **Talking Heads** jostling for the bronze; in the end it goes to **Talking Heads** for their *More Songs About Buildings and Food* (Sire) because they are still trying to do new things which, for all the excellence of **Bloody Tourists** (Mercury), **10cc** aren't — they're simply working with the old magic formula.

Anthony Phillips is another melody man, and I put on *Wise After The Event* (Arista) as the perfect soother of frazzled nerves. It's richly textured and only mildly self-indulgent. In fact, what **Phillips** does with 12-string guitars, **Chris Rainbow** does with voices, and that's why his *Looking Over My Shoulder* (Polydor) is such a feast. The man is like a human keyboard, doing things with his voice that **Brian Wilson** might once have attempted.

I'm amazed, even as I type, to see **Blondie's** *Parallel Lines* (Chrysalis) as low as number seven. Perhaps it's because although the band write pop music of the highest calibre, they are writing pure pop rather than any kind of classic melody. **Blue Oyster Cult** are the only headbanging band I enjoy, which is why *Spectres* (CBS) makes an appearance. Tunes you can hum while knocking your skull against the seat in front. Good band!

Woolly hats and effects pedals go together, don't they, and the man who makes the most of both is **Steve Hillage**, whose album *Green* (Virgin) chests the tape at number nine because it's his best yet, showing an assurance and imagination lacking in most of the year's releases; the same can be said for **Kate Bush**, whose new album is not, at the time of writing, yet in my possession. Her debut *The Kick Inside* (EMI) however, was astonishing, and I still don't mind hearing *Heeeeee-eeeeeeefe* etc. from time to time.

Near miss: what can I say about the mind-wobbling *Flamin' Groovies*? *Flamin' Groovies Now* was not a particularly fine album, but who cares when they played the gig of the year at **London's Roundhouse**? I get a lump in my throat just thinking about it...

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There was a young black man who died in poverty and obscurity some time before the last war. He recorded about ninety minutes of country blues in various hotel rooms and was so shy that he played facing the wall. There are many who say that Robert Johnson was the greatest blues player of all time, just on the evidence of those scratchy mono recordings.

All of which has nothing whatsoever to do with the *new* Robert Johnson, or rather, the Other Robert Johnson. There are superficial similarities: both were born in the South, both played guitar from an early age . . . er, that's about it, I suppose. The New Robert Johnson is white. He's spent a lot of time playing sessions in Memphis. He's the bloke who played the wacka-wacka-wacka guitar on Isaac Hayes' famous single 'Shaft'. You may also remember having seen him being fawned over by Bomber on the Old Grey Whistle Test. AND he has an album out on Ensign Records — title: *Close Personal Friend*.

I was privileged, some months ago, to hear the rhythm tracks of some of the songs demoed for that album — no lead guitar, just drums, bass and a powerful strumming acoustic guitar. Johnson always records his tracks on this basis; the sheer guts and energy of even these simple foundation backings had heads nodding and feet stamping all over the Ensign office.

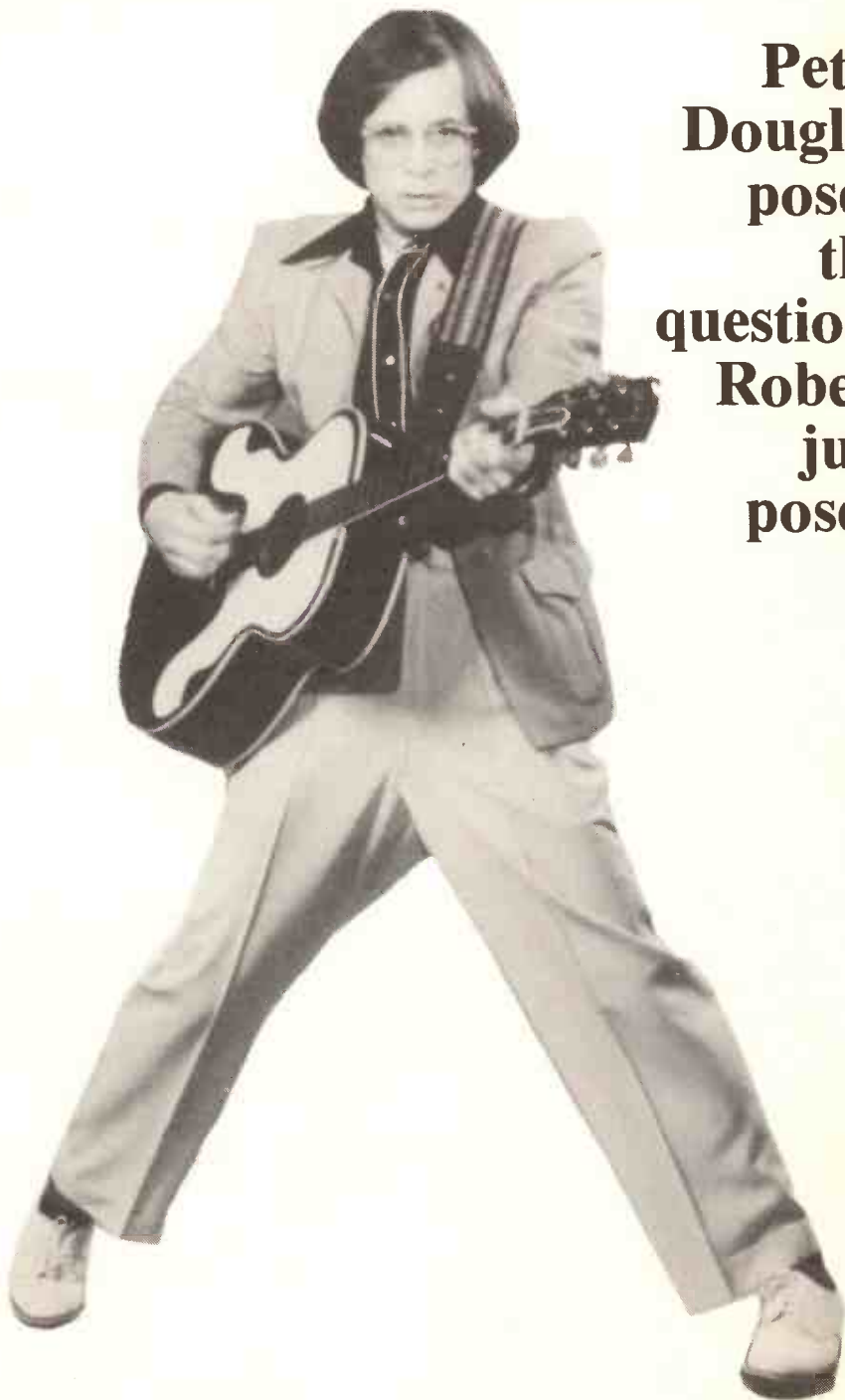
"Some people think that's the hard way, because sometimes it requires a little more work. If you set up a band you just run through one time, whereas if you put down a rhythm guitar track, first you have to put down *this* and then you gotta put down *that*, so there's a lot more time taken up, setting up all the instruments."

It was perhaps a little early in the interview to be cheeky, (*not for you, surely? Ed*) but I felt bound to say that the album seemed, on only a couple of preliminary hearings, to lack variety. Fortunately, after he had laughingly smashed a bottle of Old Gran'pappy over my head, Robert took no offence.

"I didn't think of putting MacArthur Park on one side and Shaft on the other . . ." No Slow numbers? "Personally, I didn't want to put any slow ones there, 'cause I don't like slow songs. I've never *written* a slow song, so I don't know if I would like what I did or not. But I can see your point — it might break the album up. But I just figured, shit, just kick it on *out*."

Apart from the skill and dexterity of his playing, Robert is well-known

ROBERT JOHNSON, WHAT'S THAT IN YOUR CLOSET?



Peter
Douglas
posed
the
question.
Robert
just
posed

for his large guitar collection, which consists of somewhere between twenty-five and thirty instruments, most of them dating back to the 1950's. "I collect anything from the fifties", he declares, "an' I mean *anything*. I just love fifties memorabilia, I guess — the guitars, the record players, the cars."

Robert's first guitar was one he and his uncle made from a standard pattern when Robert was only eight or nine years old. The first he actually bought was a Gibson SG, which suited him admirably thanks to the thinness of its neck. He "suffers" from small hands.

"The shape of those necks from the fifties and early sixties was like a half-moon, fits right in the palm. The year to look for is around '63. A really tiny, real flat fingerboard, and it's real thin, and from the top of the neck to the bottom it's one size — it doesn't taper.

Amongst his other guitars are three 1959 sunburst Les Pauls, one of which appears on the album sleeve, a 1957 Les Paul gold top, a 1959 Explorer, a 1956 Stratocaster sunburst... not bad so far, eh? More extraordinary yet, many of these are brand new, virtually unplayed, in their original cases. They are what Robert calls "under the bed" models; they were bought in the fifties by people who never bothered to learn how to play.

"They're very strange people that have these guitars, I can't figure it out. For example, we found a 1951 Ford with 4,000 miles on it. It was like *brand new*. An' I bought it." Could have sworn we were talking about guitars just a second ago, but there we are — when you're a collector everything tends to overlap. "Mainly I'm a Gibson man", he continued. "I've got two Everly Brothers guitars. They're acoustic guitars, like a J200, but there was a model they made called the J185, which was a fifties guitar, and that one's a little bit smaller than the J200. They took that guitar and put pearl star inlays on the fingerboard, and there was a star on top of the headstock; they were black, and they had the big pickguards. The first two that Gibson made for the Everly Brothers had white pickguards, big white gaudy pickguards. And these pickguards have turned yellow over the years. This guitar was the first of the two made for the Everlys in '61, and the other ones I've got are just the standard models from the factory. But I managed to locate this one — it just had a little crack in the neck which I had repaired. I saw it in a store and I thought, 'Boy I jus' gotta

have it, I'll give ya anything ya want fo' it.' And he said, 'Well, I'll take a new J200', so I just reached over, took one, bought it and gave it to 'im!"

He also has a B25 Gibson acoustic made in the early sixties, and some Silvertone guitars. These were department store instruments which you could order through Sears & Roebuck. In fact they were made by Danelectro. If you saw Robert on the Whistle Test, you may have noticed him using one of these very beasts. Horrible looking, isn't it, Robert?



1959 Les Paul Standard curly maple top: Robert's number one axe.

"Isn't it gaudy? Isn't it good?" he chuckled. "It's got those bar pickups, like a big finger or somethin'. But they're the hottest pick-ups. Jimmy Page used one a long time ago. You'd order it from the Sears Catalogue and it came with a case — the amplifier was built into the case. The whole thing was \$99. You'd just open it up, and there's all your controls and your little speaker. The sound from the guitar is very tinny, but it's not weak. The guitar's made out of a sort of clapboard, but the neck is solid and it's bolted on, and it's got excellent frets, perfect neck size, very easy to use. What you do with Sears, you jus' look it up in the catalogue, call 'em up, go down to the dock, and there it is in a box."

Then we were off again on the collecting trail. Yes, of course he has a mid-sixties Firebird, a 12-string and a 6-string Rickenbacker from the early sixties... Now a 12-string Rick, the 360 model, costs £545 new at the moment. "Mine's very rare — got the sparkly inlays and the grey case. They're so unpopular in the States

now that you can find a used one there for a hundred dollars. There ain't no sense in payin' a thousand. I paid two hundred dollars for my black one. It was in the music store that I worked in, and for years nobody bought it. They're very unfashionable. The six-string is the same model, the six-string version, but it's red."

He has also a collection of old Fender amps — the ones with the beige cloth, made between 1953 and 1958. And, predictably, he has a Fender Consort (brown) brand new out of the box.

"I stuff 'em in the closet. I haven't seen some of my guitars in years. They're over at a friend's house."

"They're always a surprise to you, whether it's a year, two years, three years since you've seen 'em. Sometimes if a friend comes over from England we'll spend a whole day just draggin' 'em out. It's such a thrill.

"I predicted that the price of these guitars would go up, so I started early. I don't have a whole lot of money, but that sunburst Les Paul on the cover of the album, I had to pay \$3,800 for. And the other ones that I have I've bought for as cheap as \$300. But the price of those sunbursts now in New York is \$5,000."

Another of the guitars used by Johnson on the Whistle Test film was a Les Paul TV, which is similar in almost every respect to a Junior, but a different colour. On the amp front, he spends a lot of time with the old Fender combo's, but his favourite set-up is an old Fender Bassman cabinet with a Marshall valve 50 watt top. Most of the album was recorded like this, using one of his sunburst Les Pauls.

"I can get, by e.q.'ing and just setting the tones and stuff, almost a Fender sound from the Les Paul, and not many people can do that. I attribute a lot of that to my right hand. It's hard to explain — it's just the way I control the knobs and hit the strings. To get my lead sound I crank everything up. The amp doesn't have to be too loud, because you put it on like number two, and there's not much difference between two and ten on a Marshall 'cept a lot more distortion. I never touch the tone knobs at all on my Gibson, just never use 'em, leave 'em on full treble. And I mostly use the lead pick-up. By turnin' down the Marshall to where the gain isn't so intense, you can work with that and work with the presence tone. So you sit there and play lightly, and find your clean sound. Banking the volume from 10

Robert Johnson

back to 7½ on the guitar with my little finger is what I do a lot of the time, and then back up to 10 for lead."

What about the little tricks, though — the ones that young guitar players yearn to know about, the tricks that, did they but know them, would turn all into screeching superstars overnight. Spill the beans, Robert:

"Jus' plug 'er in an' let 'er rip! Y'see, I've never really practised at all. I haven't even played the guitar now in five months. For two years previous to the album I didn't play at all. There was too many other things goin' — and I wasn't being paid to play. I was just doin' other things for a living. I was so disgusted and frustrated as a musician, and Memphis is not a real musical city any more. There's not a lot of work around. I hate playin' night-clubs, and there just wasn't anybody in town that I thought was on the same level that I was mentally, so I just didn't even bother playing.

"I guess I'm just gifted, y'know, 'cause I don't work at it. I don't write songs that much. I don't do

anything that much. I could pick up a guitar now, and I haven't really played recently, and I could pretty much do some things that you'd be impressed with."

Well I wasn't overimpressed with the lad's modesty, but I had a sneaky feeling that he wasn't boasting — rather, that he was stating facts. This notion was sufficiently discomforting to prompt a change of tack. What strings does he use?

"I was usin' Emmons steel guitar strings for a while, and they were workin' real good for me. But I think it's up to the manufacturers how deep they wanna go — how good an alloy do they wanna use, and how good does it need to be wrapped. Like Ernie Ball strings — I just can't use 'em any more, and years ago I could. Gibson are making an excellent string now. They're making a Snapper, I think it's called. They're pre-stretched — I think there's some kind of balance in them that hasn't been there before. So I'm using a combination of the new balanced strings and GHS. Sometimes I'll use a 10, 13, 17, 34, 44 and so on. But most of the time I use a 9, 12 and 16. Usually I like a pretty heavy B string. I like to up it a size to get a little bit of leverage there."

In common with the majority of

guitarists today, he eschews effects pedals — just a bit of echo on the mixing board and maybe the odd touch of MXR flanger.

"I'll tell you what I did do, though, that might be interestin' to ya. Somebody had mounted a little Barcus Berry pick-up in one of my Everly Brothers guitars and cut a hole down there, like where a Les Paul would plug in. Well, I didn't like the Barcus Berry so I jerked all that shit out and I got one of these black Lawrence pick-ups (they're not quite as strong as the red ones). I got that Lawrence, clamped it in and ran the wire down, found me a piece of tortoiseshell, cut it, put a little ring on there to make it look neat so I plug the guitar directly into the board, so it's like a half-acoustic, 'cause it's miked as well. It gives the whole thing mandolin-type overtones. On some tracks I'll do that and then I'll take my B25 and overdub it for a real pretty acoustic sound, because the B25's got a deep sound, and the Everly's got a more clangy acoustic sound."

Suddenly the door burst open and the next interviewer blundered in. It was clearly time to leave.

"If I see one of those Rick 12's I'll ship it to ya," called Robert. I'll hold him to that. □

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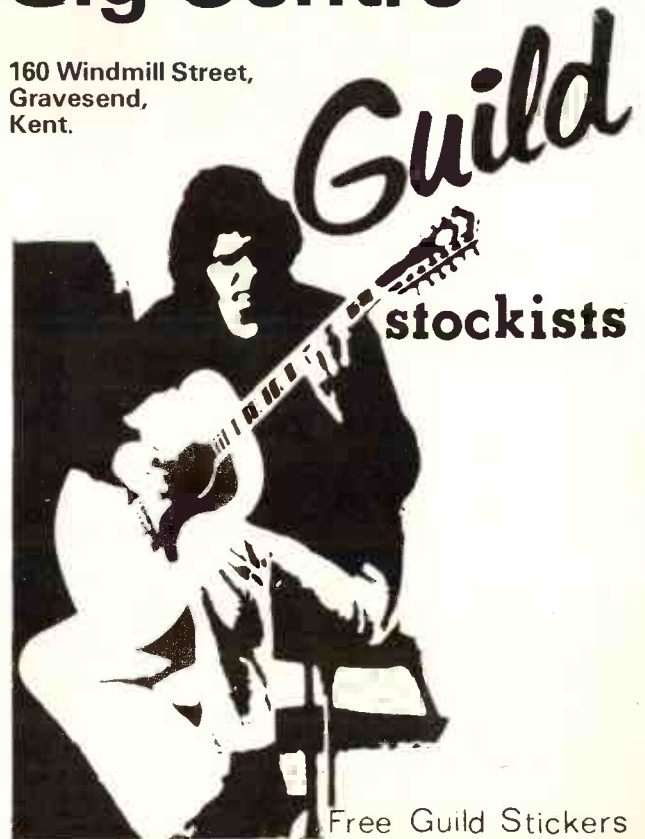
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RICHARD THOMPSON

Rock music has probably got more fringes than Roger Daltrey's jacket — although they serve very little practical purpose. Rock's fringe performers, however, tend to add spice, distinction and variety to the whole musical spectrum. Many move in and out of the main stream, depositing classic albums on the way to please punters and confuse critics, before disappearing back to their various country retreats. Richard Thompson is one of these. Nearly a recluse — by music business standards — living up in Norfolk, contributing from time to time to other people's albums, writing profusely but, of late, recording precious little, Richard has just done the annual trip to town to deposit his classic album *First Light*. A short tour is to follow, and then, one assumes, the return journey to Norfolk to escape again.

Richard started his public musical life as a founder member of Fairport Convention (disinterested parties can now turn the page) with whom he stayed for five albums as songwriter, singer and a particularly fine guitarist both acoustic and electric. Fairport may not have been everyone's proverbial cup of tea, but as a band it single-handedly created a whole new musical mode which enabled traditional English themes to reach a considerably wider audience. Richard Thompson's sojourn with Fairport lasted just long enough for him to write one of the genuine classic songs of the decade — *Meet on the Ledge*.

Style

After leaving Fairport Richard began recording with his wife Linda following the release of a single solo album. The last — and excellent — project was *Pour Down Like Silver* which appeared in '75. Three years later we have *First Light* — received to 'critical acclaim' and probably destined for relative commercial failure. There's just not a lot of bread on the fringe. Good music all too rarely is successful music.

Anyway, I met up with Richard Thompson at Chrysalis's offices off London's Oxford Street. He was looking suitably unimpressed with the hassle of travelling down to town to promote a record,

Tom Stock asked all the questions, and the first hermit of folk answered a couple



which in his own words, is for him a finished product, already a recorded piece of his past. Thompson aficionados will have noticed that *First Light* is quite a radical departure for a man so closely linked with the progress and nurturing of essentially English music. Even the accompanying press release describes his style as being "dramatic intensely personal — and intensely British — music".

In fact, *First Light* has some very definite Americanisms probably brought about by the inclusion of three Americans on the album — Willie Weeks (bass), Neil Larson (keyboards) and Andy Newmark (drums). It is at this point that we started the conversation.

"I think the album is just less self-conscious. It wasn't done to a deliberate style. I hadn't really considered using American musicians; that came about by circumstance. We tried to get hold of English musicians but the people we wanted were working at the time. Andy Newmark was coming over to do something else and we fixed things up with him. It was all speculation because I didn't know them at all. They came highly recommended so I thought I'd give it a chance."

The album also has the benefit of the talents of John Kirkpatrick but, I suggested, was the inclusion of the button accordion just a token gesture, a head nod in the direction of 'folk'? "I'm not conscious of it

being anything out of the ordinary to my taste really. What you say about John Kirkpatrick — I don't know. I like working with John really because he is such a good musician and people one can work with easily are often hard to find, and he's a very versatile and creative musician in all situations."

First Light also differs from previous Thompson albums in that there is a significant increase in the amount of 'up-tempo' material. There's a definite rock feeling which perhaps has been repressed or even non-existent in the past. "I think it's more up-tempo to be a bit more accessible; to be critical of our records in the past, they haven't really been that accessible: in some ways it was a conscious decision. If you have say sixteen titles for an album, you select the more accessible ones."

Experiments

Thompson has for many years been involved in the very loose network of British 'folk-rock' (for lack of a better categorisation) artists who seem to turn up ad infinitum on each other's records, swapping bands with almost the same regularity which was witnessed in the American West Coast scene in the early seventies. I wondered if the inclusion of these three Americans with no history whatsoever of this type of musical network, had been

(to quote 1066 And All That) a 'good thing', and if he felt that network had perhaps been rather restricting.

"I think it's turned out to be a good thing — it does broaden one's horizons as they say."

Things were not progressing with their usual smoothness, and my indisputable charm appeared to be in dispute! I had visions of another tortuous hour similar to the one spent with David Gilmour. Thompson appears, in front of the tape recorder at least, to be a very self-conscious animal, protective, and slightly uneasy about committing himself without redress to the machinations of the archetypal rock music journalist. The conversation moved to instruments. On one track on *First Light*, entitled *House of Cards*, there appears a particular stunning guitar sound, a fuzzed yet crisp lead which almost physically bites through the backing tracks. What is it? I wondered.

"That's a Roland guitar synthesizer," came the reply. "I haven't got one myself, but I borrowed one for the record and wasted a whole day getting the wrong sounds out of it although I probably got some rather interesting things. It's a tremendous thing, used in a particular way. I'd like to get hold of one to further my experiments, but unfortunately I can't afford it!" (How about it Brodr. Jorgensen?) "I did use it on three or four tracks on the album — I found I could get really good harmonium noises out of it."

Communicate

"I did have to alter my technique to play the guitar itself, however. One has to be very positive on it which makes it hard to do subtle things because the subtle things are too soft to trigger the synthesizer."

Americans and guitar synthesizers on a record by an 'intensely British' musician I mused. Is he looking for material success now? The British folk rock scene, of which he is an integral part could primarily be criticised for being too purist and elitist, concerned more with its own development than with the reactions of those supposed to be listening to it.

"I think that's very true; in that case, yes, I would rather not be so specific as to make folk rock records. I can't see that it really exists as a successful form. When one makes something like a record, one wants to communicate; it may

□ □ □

RICHARD THOMPSON

be to a few people or it might be to a lot of people. I feel it's more important to communicate with the right people."

Communication also involves live touring and Thompson is on the road as I write this piece. He's not using that American rhythm section ("can't afford them, I think they'd be pretty expensive"). "Ideally I'd like to use a twelve piece band but I'm down to about six. My ideal band would consist of four violins, two cellos, a versatile wind instrument, keyboards, about three percussionists, plus guitars, bass and drums." Thompson is known and widely respected as a guitar player as well as a singer/songwriter, and is an accomplished master of both acoustic and electric instruments. ("Acoustic came first because I couldn't afford an electric one").

"I treat the two as different instruments entirely — I've never played a really light strung acoustic guitar or anything like that." Strings are in fact DeMerte lights which apparently are more akin to a medium gauge from other manufacturers.

His acoustic influences have mostly been American — a surprising revelation really considering his 'Englishness'. Doc Watson figures highly on the list, although he also acknowledges Irish and Northumbrian pipes as an influence on his guitar playing. On the electric side he uses a Strat and a Telecaster. "The Strat I've got is quite difficult to play — I have to fight it all the time, but the tone is superb; there's a sort of hollowness to the sound which is really appealing." Amplification is either by an old Ampex or a Fender Deluxe Reverb which he describes as being "a particularly sweet one".

Richard is well aware of the paradox inherent in being a retiring character and yet being involved in a business which seems to demand glamour and assertion to satisfy its voracious appetite. He's not, for example, a gushing interviewee!

"I find it slightly unreal talking about music because in the end I don't have any perspective on it. I don't know how music's played really: one develops a technique of playing, and of writing songs, but the actual music doesn't come out of you, does it? It comes from somewhere else, as far as I can see. Like when you get to a

good bit — you can't switch it off; you're absent during the writing of all the good songs. One sort of participates, but it's not you, it's not this person called 'you' who everybody wants to quantify and solidify. The reason that I like to keep a low profile is I don't believe in this solid person that's made up of people's opinions. I don't believe people are that fixed. I couldn't survive if I believed what other people thought about me, because it's not true; if people praise you, and if people attack you it's the same."

Microscope

But what about critical praise of the album, for example?

"In a sense, I've finished with the album. The interesting part for me is making it in the first place and as soon as it's finished I want to make another one but it's never possible. As far as I'm concerned that's it; here it is, it's yours. I can't look at an album as this thing in which I have to live. It's like a cast off to me. It's gone, it's the music of a particular moment. I don't feel the same way about it now as I did then. I wouldn't perform the songs in the same way; I want to change the arrangements even now."

For a man so overtly on the conservative side of rock music Thompson's views on the New Wave are quite startling. "All the best music is coming from the New Wave. All the best ideas are there, the music's fresh. Punk's a lot more honest on the whole than any previous musical revolution. I'm convinced the music is more original than the bands of the early sixties: they were just listening to a lot of imported records and copying them. We could expect a punk Richard and Linda Thompson album — a little more laid-back punk, however!"

That seemed a likely place to bring our conversation to a close. There is undoubtedly more to learn about Richard Thompson but there's a distinct feeling that he doesn't want to let the character out of the bag. For an assassination, one needs the victim's character and he's far too together to let his out under the microscope. A very deep and personal man, Thompson allows only tantalising glimpses at his talent through the medium of his records. All the sadder then that there's been a three year wait for this one, and who knows how long 'til the next. My copy of First Light's going to be pretty worn out by then!

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ABBEY ROAD STUDIOS

Address 3 Abbey Road, London NW8 9AY

Telephone 01-286 1161

Studio Manager K. N. Townsend

Engineers Peter Vince, Peter Mew, John Kurlander, Mike Jarratt, Pat Stapley, Tony Clarke, Peter James, Allan Rouse, Haydn Bendall

Capacity Studio 1: 120; 2: 50; 3: 30

Instrument available free Steinway grand pianos, celestes, harmonium, harpsichord, Hammond organs, jangle and out of

tune pianos, electric pianos, Harmony Vocoder

Instruments available for hire Complete range of instruments available through outside agencies

Microphones Over 300 condenser microphones, mainly Neumann and AKG

Desks 2 EMI desks 24 in 16 out; 1 EMI/Neve desk 36 in 24 out with NECAM

Tape machines Studer 2-24 track

Echo facilities 3 natural echo chambers and 6 stereo reverb plates (EMT)

Reduction suite One multitrack reduction suite with EMI desk

Copying facilities Extensive facilities for tape and cassette copying

Rates £55 per hour Studios 1 and 3; £52 per hour Studio 2

Special remarks Two mobile recording units capable of worldwide operation. Five disc cutting suites equipped with EMI transfer consoles and Neumann cutting lathes.

AIR STUDIOS

Address 214 Oxford Street (4th

floor), London W1

Telephone 01-637 2758

Studio Manager David Harries
Engineers Geoff Emerick, Steve Nye, Jon Kelly, Pete Henderson, Mike Stavrou, Colin Fairley, Steve Churchyard

Capacity Studio 1: 70 musicians, Studio 2: 35 musicians

Instruments available free

Bosendorfer grand piano

Instruments available for hire Hammond B3 organ

Microphones Neumann, AKG, Sennheiser, STC

Desk Neve

Tape machines 3M, Studer stereo

Outboard equipment AMS, Eventide, Audio and Design, Urei, Neve etc.

Echo facilities EMT 140 and 240
Reduction suite Two — studios three and four

Copying facilities One suite

Rates £50 per hour for any facility in studios 1 and 2, £45 per hour in studio 3, £35 per hour in studio 4. 20% surcharge between 6pm and 8am, and all day Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays

Hours of working Normal booking times are 10am to 1pm, 2.30pm to 5.30pm and 7pm to 10pm.

AUDIOGENIC

Address 34-36 Crown Street, Reading, Berks

Telephone 0734 595647

Studio Manager Henry Smithson

Engineers Martin Maynard, Kirk Thorn, Rob Boughton

Capacity 7 to 10 musicians

Instruments available free Grand piano, string synth, Fender and Vox amps

Instruments available for hire Upon request

Microphones AKG, Neumann, Beyer, Electrovoice, Shure

Desk Custom 16/8

Tape machines Revox A77, A700, Otari 7380

Outboard equipment Audio and Design compressors, Scamp ADT, noise gates, equalisers

Echo facilities Master room, Grampian

Copying facilities Cassette duplication services

Rates £10 per hour, £45 per 5 hour session, £110 per 14 hour session

Recent clients Regular work for Magnet Records, CBS. ATV, BBC, Stadium Dogs, Straws, Criss Thompson, Polydor, Blonde On Blonde, Kenny Lynch, Peter Gage, QP Enterprises.

CARGO RECORDING STUDIOS

Address Kenion Street, off



◀ A mixdown session in Studio Control Room 3 at EMI's Abbey Road Studios, London. The engineers are remixing a 24 track recording down to 2 track stereo using a 36 input/24 output EMI-NEVE mixing desk. The desk has a NECAM computer assisted mixdown facility whose data entry panel can be seen centre/left.



£140 per day, 2 track mobile £90 per day. No overtime charges, 10% cash discount
Working hours Open 24 hours 7 days a week
Recent clients Gang of Four, Joy Division, Durrutti Column, Granada TV, Ludus, John Dowie, Victor Brox Blues Train, Solid Fuel Advisory Board, John the postman.

CRAIGHALL STUDIO

Address 68 Craighall Road, Edinburgh, EH6 4RL
Telephone 031-552 3685
Studio Manager Bryce Laing
Engineers Stuart Jeffrey, Philip Whittaker
Capacity 30 musicians
Instruments available free Steinway piano
Instruments available for hire Haven organ
Microphones Neumann, AKG, Shure
Desk Neve 3058 24/16
Tape machines Studer A80 16 track and 2 track
Outboard equipment Auto phase unit
Echo facilities EMT plate, Masterroom micmix
Copying facilities Studer 12/2 desk with A80 machines
Rates £18 per hour, 25% surcharge after 6pm, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % surcharge after 11pm
Special remarks Fully equipped mobile Mercedes OB van, 8 track A80, Tweed Audio 14/8 desk etc.

DJM STUDIOS

Address James House, 5-11 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8SE
Telephone 405 5631, 242 6886 ext 277
Studio Manager Alan Florence
Engineers Dick Plant, John Couper, Keith Bessey
Capacity Studio 1: 30 musicians, Studio 2/Remix: 3
Instruments available free Piano
Instruments available for hire Any
Microphones shure, Sennheiser, Neumann, AKG, Electrovoice, Beyer
Desk MCI JH540 computerised
Tape machines MCI 24 track (also 16 and 8 headblocks), 8, 4, 2 track
Outboard equipment Dolbys, DBX, most 'tcys' currently available. SMPTE sync unit to enable 46 track line-up soon to be installed
Echo facilities EMT
Reduction suite as Studio 1
Copying facilities Most configurations
Rates £50 per hour Studio 1, £45

Duke Street, Rochdale, Lancs
Telephone 0706 524420
Studio Manager John Brierley
Engineer John Brierley
Capacity 30 musicians
Instruments available free Piano, drums
Instruments available for hire Most
Microphones AKG, Beyer, Neumann, Calrec
Desk Soundcraft 24 into 16

Tape machines Cadey 16 track
Outboard equipment Limiter/compressors, Analog delay, echo, reverb, flanging
Echo facilities Reverb/tape analog
Copying facilities Reel to cassette, cassette to cassette
Rates £12 per hour, £96 per day for 16 track; £7 per hour, £56 per day for 8 track. 16 track mobile £200 per day, 8 track mobile

The elegant reception area of Sound Track Studios, Copenhagen (above); the equally elegant control room (bottom left) and the "live" acoustics area of the studio (bottom right).



Continued over

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Address Great Gutter Lane, Willerby, Hull, North Humberside, HU10 6DW
Telephone 0482 653116
Studio Manager Roy Neave
Engineers Roy Neave, Keith Herd

Capacity 10 musicians

Instruments available free
Piano, Hammond organ, Yamaha polyphonic synth, Logan string machine

Instruments available for hire
Drums, Fender Rhodes
Microphones Neumann, AKG, Beyer

Desk Custom built 12 in 8 out
Tape machines Ampex 8 track, 2 Revox, 2 Nakamichi
Echo facilities AKG BX20 reverb unit

Copying facilities Tape - tape, disc - tape, cassette
Rates £10 per hour recording, £8.50 per hour mixing
Hours of working 24 hours a day 7 days a week

Recent clients Heatwave, Goldie, Michael Chapman, Bernie Clifton, Nigel Pegrum
Special remarks Masters, demos, production.

GOOD EARTH

Address 59 Dean Street, London W1

Telephone 734 0864/434 1490
Studio Managers Colin Thurston, Kit Woolven
Engineers As above

Capacity 20 musicians
Instruments available free
Piano, moog, drums

Microphones Neumann U87s, U47s, 188s, 184s, AKG D224, D202, Shure, Unidines, various Beyers
Desk Triad TSM

Tape machines Lyrec 24 multitrack, Studer A80, B62 2 tracks

Outboard equipment Eventide DDL, harmoniser, flanger, Aphex, Scamp rack, various limiters

Echo facilities EMT 140 + 240
Rates £35 per hour
Recent clients Jingles, album for Able Label Music (formerly Ring-O-Records), Steve Gibbons Band, Radiators, Tony Visconti.

HOT ICE HLJODRITI RECORDING STUDIOS

Address Box 138, Tronuhrauni 6, Hajnarfjordur, Iceland
Telephone 5-37-76

Studio Manager Sveinn Klausen
Engineers Tony Cook, Jonas R. Jonsson, Alan Lucas
Capacity 20 musicians

Instruments available free
Yamaha grand piano, Wurlitzer upright piano, Fender Rhodes, Ampeg bass amp

Instruments available for hire All kinds of top quality instruments and amps

Microphones Neumann, Beyer, AKG, Shure, Sennheiser, Electrovoice, Sony
Desk MCI 428 Series 28 into 24

Tape machines MCI JH114 24 track, Ampex ATR 100 2 track and Revoxes

Outboard equipment Eventide FL201 Inst. flanger, Eventide H910 harmoniser, ROR parametric equaliser, DBX 160 comp/limiter, Pultec Program Equal, Eventide 2830 Omnipressor

Echo facilities EMT reverberation plate, AKG echo unit, Eventide digital delay

Copying facilities JVC and Teac cassette machines, Revox 2 track machines
Rates £33 per hour any time night or day.

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 Instruments available for hire Hammond with Leslie, Yamaha piano, clavinet, Korg, Logan, Fender Rhodes, guitars, bass
 Microphones AKG, Neumann, Beyer, Schoeps, EU, Calrec
 Desk KMH Custom, MCI 528 + Data
 Tape machines M79, Lyrec, MCI, Studer, Revox
 Outboard equipment ADR, Scamp, Urei, Pandora, Time-Warp, MXR
 Echo facilities 2 EMT plates, 1 EMT foil, master room Reduction suite MCI Data plus a small overdub studio
 Rates Sw. Crs. 500 per hour.

IMPULSE SOUND RECORDING STUDIO

Address 71 High Street East, Wallsend NE28 7RJ, Tyne and Wear
 Telephone 0632 624999
 Studio Manager David Wood
 Engineers Micky Sweeney, Geoff Heslop, Steve Thompson
 Capacity 25 musicians
 Instruments available free Piano, drum kit, Peavey Twin Reverb amp, small synth

Instruments available for hire Polymoog, Arp synth, Fender Rhodes, and most other instruments given notice
 Microphones Neumann U87s, AKG D224s, D202s, D12s, Calrec 650, 652, 654, Beryer M69
 Desk Raindirk 18/8/16
 Tape machines Ampex MM1000, Studer B62, Revox A77
 Outboard equipment 4 track/2 track mobile
 Echo facilities Tape echo and

reverb
 Copying facilities Reel — reel, reel — cassette
 Rates On application
 Special remarks Full record production service — "be your own record company" — proving very popular with club and cabaret artists; also songwriter service, details and brochures on request.
KMH STUDIO AB
 Address Hornsgatan 78, S-117 21 Stockholm, Sweden

LEADER SOUND
 Address 209 Rochdale Road, Greetland, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX4 8JE
 Telephone 0422 76161
 Studio Manager Bill Leader
 Engineer John Gill
 Capacity 8 musicians
 Instruments available free Piano
 Microphones AKG C24, C451, D12, D19, D202, Calrec 1050
 Desk Raindirk 10/4/8
 Tape machines Itam 8 track, Bias, Nagra, Revox
 Echo facilities Master room
 Copying facilities Real, cassette, disc
 Rates £5 per hour
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 (0223) 64263





MAGRITTE MUSIC STUDIOS

Address Holloway Lane,
Harmondsworth, West
Drayton, Middlesex

Telephone 01-897 9670

Studio Manager Daniel Priest

Engineers Daniel Priest, Eric Hine

Capacity 12 musicians

Instruments available free

Bosendorfer grand piano, Fender stereo 88 piano, clavinet, Fender and Marshall amps, speaker cabs

Instruments available for hire
Arp 2000 string machine, all percussion, any others on request

Microphones Neumann, Sennheiser, AKG, Beyer

Desk Helios 36 in 24 out

Tape machines Lyrec 24/16, Ampex ATR100, Phillips PRO20, Revox 700 & A77

Outboard equipment Noise gates, graphic EQ, digital delay, DBX, 3 phasers, 4 flangers, compressors/limiters, HH tape echo

Echo facilities EMT stereo plate, master room, Fairchild plate

Reduction suite 4

Lockwood/Tannoy RDG monitors, tuned room

Copying facilities reel-reel, reel-cassette

Rates £350 per day inclusive of accommodation for 6 people or £30 per hour 24 track, £20 per hour 16 track

Recent clients Mungo Jerry (co-produced and arranged by Daniel Priest), Allan Clarke, Gary Benson, The Neon Hearts,



No need to get cold feet here: a session taking place in Iceland's Hot Ice.

Smiths Crisps jingles, the 'Stay' advert single.

MARQUEE STUDIOS

Address 10 Richmond Mews,
Dean Street, London W1

Telephone 01-437 6731/2

Studio Directors Gery Collins, Simon White

Engineers John Eden, Steve Holroyd, Phil Harding, Tim Painter, (technical) Jerry Browse

Capacity 1000 sq. ft. accomodating 35 musicians

Instruments available free

Steinway grand piano

Desk MCI JH100 24/16 track, MCI JH140 4/2 track, MCI JH120 Stereo

Outboard equipment DBX160 and Universal Audio compressor/limiters, Lexicon digital delay, Eventide Harmoniser, Orban Sibilance Controller, Keepex and Meyer noise gates, Allison Gain Brain, Orban and ITT parametric equalisers, MXR Quad Pack,

Grampian spring effects unit, Dolby A

Echo facilities EMT echo plates

REMIX SUITE

60 sq. ft. overdub studio.

Desk MCI536 36 in 32 out with MCI JH50 automation and Plasma VU/Peak display

Tape machines MCI JH114 24/16 track, 3 x MCI JH120 stereo

Monitoring Eastlake TMI/Amcron DC300A, Auratone baby monitors

Outboard equipment DBX 160 and Universal Audio compressor/limiters, Eventide digital delay with pitch change facility, Marshall time modulator, ITI & Urei graphic equalisers, Keepex and Meyer noise gates, Allison gain brain limiter/compressor, Orban Sibilance Controller, Dolby A

Echo facilities EMT echo plates, Copy Bay Studer 2 track machines, Neal cassette recorders available for tape cassette and disc to tape copies

Rates £44 per hour. £8

surcharge after 6pm and weekends

Recent clients Remix for Status Quo & Gerry Rafferty

Special remarks Live recordings from adjoining Marquee Club

NED SCRUMPO'S "CHEAPO CHEAP" STUDIO

Address Ned Scrumpo's Emporium of Goodies, 144 Elm Grove, Southsea, Hants

Telephone Portsmouth 816451

Studio Manager Bob Rivers

Engineers Tom Nowell, Dave Moore

Capacity 7-10 musicians

Instruments available for hire

Vox AC30, Darburn 100 watt combo, Laney bass amp, Ampeg bass cab, drum kit, Elka electric piano

Microphones AKG, Ross

Desk Canary 10/2 stereo

Tape machines Phillips, Akai, Sony, Amstrad

Echo facilities Echo chamber

Copying facilities Tape decks

Rates £4 per hour using own gear, £5 per hour using studio gear

Hours of working 10am to 11pm

Monday to Thursday, 10am to 6pm Friday to Sunday.

PLUTO RECORDING STUDIOS

Address 36 Granby Row, Manchester 1

Telephone 061 228 2022

Studio Manager Keith Hopwood

Engineers Ray Buckley, Joan O'Connor

Capacity 30 musicians

Instruments available free

Bechstein grand piano, amps

Instruments available for hire

Arp Odyssey

Microphones Neumann, AKG, Sennheiser, Beyer

BLACK

ECHOES



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BLACK
ECHOES



Another distinctly Continental panorama: shots of the hardware (above) matched by the space and style (below) of the recording areas.



Desk MCI 28/24
Tape machines 3M 24 track, Studer mastering
Outboard equipment MXR ddl, A & D compex limiters, phasers, Varispeed, Dolby EQ, Orban Parasound
Echo facilities EMT plate
Copying facilities Studio 2: 4/2 track with vocal booth
Rates £20 per hour Studio 1; £28 per hour 16 track, £25 per hour 8 track Studio 2. 25% overtime after 6pm, weekends and Bank Holidays
Recent clients Rich Kids, Sad Cafe, Tony Christie, Jingles for Guinness, Ford, VW, Dunlop, Girobank.

PYE STUDIOS
Address ATV House, Bryanston Street, W1
Telephone 408 8114
Studio Manager Howard Barrow
Instruments available for hire Anything
Desk Cadac computer-assisted 44 in 32 out also Neve 26/16/8
Tape machines Studer 24, 4, 2 tracks
Outboard equipment Tannoy monitors, Amcron power amps
Rates On application
Special remarks Studio 2 fitted by Eastlake, also master disc cutting facilities

QUEST STUDIOS
Address 71 Windmill Road, Luton, Bedfordshire
Telephone Luton 414297
Studio Manager Dave Cook
Engineer Dave Cook
Capacity 7 musicians
Instruments available free Piano, Slingerland drum kit, synthesizer, guitar amp
Instruments available for hire Any
Microphones Neumann, Sennheiser, AKG, Shure, Beyer
Desk Soundcraft 16/8 Series 11
Tape machines Brenell 1" 8 track with Richardson electronics, two Teac mixdown machines

Outboard equipment Audio & Design compressor/limiters, Klark Teknik graphic equalisers, Eventide Harmoniser, flanger, digital delay
Echo facilities Master room stereo reverb, Roland Space-Echo
Copying facilities Reel-reel, reel-cassette, disc-tape.
Rates From £8 per hour, weekdays daily rate £60.
Hours of working 24 hours a day
Recent clients Split Enz, Aviator, Hi-Fi, Tim Hart, ATV Music, Chrysalis Music, Druid, The Jets
Special remarks Our experience
Continued over





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RELIGHT STUDIOS

Address Hilvarenbeek PO Box 64, Holland

Telephone 4255 2589

Studio Manager D. C. Van Velden

Engineers R. Freeman, P. G. Chateau, M. Weytmans

Capacity 100 musicians

Instruments available free
Bechstein grand, percussion etc.

Instruments available for hire
Anything

Microphones Neumann, AKG, Electrovoice, Sennheiser, Altec

Desk Midas 36 in 24 + 4 out

Tape machines MCI 24 track, Studer 2 track

Outboard equipment Keepex,

STC

Desk Rupert Neve Custom 32/16/24

Tape machines 3Ms 24 track M79, 3Ms 16 track M79

Outboard equipment Harmoniser, Keepex, Auto Pan, Brain Gain, Dolby A, graphics, Time Cube, Time Modulator, width units

Echo facilities EMT and AKG

Rates On application.

ROC STUDIOS

Address Artillerivej 40, DK-2300, Copenhagen, Denmark

Telephone 01 57 06 00

Studio Manager

Mike Andreasen

Engineers Mike Andreasen, Per Meistrup, Hans Joergen Manscher

Capacity 25 musicians

Instruments available free
Steinway grand piano, Hammer spinet, Hammond TR100,

Leslie, Mellotron SM400, Logan string synth, Roland SH1000 synth, Slingerland drumkit, Rot tom toms, Asba congas, amps,

guitars, effects pedals etc

Microphones AKG, Neumann, Sennheiser, Shure



Cows on the track in sunny Holland

harmoniser, flanger, Aphex etc
Echo facilities 3 stereo plates, one chamber

Rates On application

Recent clients Genesis (2 albums), Cat Stevens, Gentle Giant, Peter Gabriel, Boomtown Rats, Black Sabbath, Strawbs

R. G. JONES RECORDING STUDIOS

Address Beulah Road, London SW19 3SB

Telephone 01-540 9881

Studio Manager Robin Jones

Engineers G. Kitchingham, V. Rogers, N. Nykes, M. Pullan, J. Maddon

Capacity 25 musicians

Instruments available free
Steinway 'B' grand piano

Instruments available for hire
Most

Microphones Neumann, AKG,

Desk Soundcraft 28 into 24 custom built

Tape machines Lyrec 24 track, 2 x Studer 2 track, 2 x Lyrec 2 track

Outboard equipment 28ch DBX noise reduction, DBX compressor/limiters, graphic equalisers, White Analyser, Analogue Delay and effected generators (Marshall and Mic-mix)

Echo facilities Master room and tape echo

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Microphones U87, KM84, KM56, SM69, KM54, D224, D12, D202, SM56
Desk Trident "A" 34 input 24 output
Tape machines Lyrec 24 track, Studer 16 track, two 2 track A80s
Outboard equipment 4 Urei 1176 peak, 6 Keepex, gain brain, EQ, comp/limiters, harmoniser, flanger, phaser stereo, Spectrum analyser
Echo facilities EMT plate, AKG BX20
Copying facilities Revox A77s, cassette machines
Rates 375 Kr per hour
Hours of working 24 hours a day. Closed New Year and Christmas.



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Studio Manager Dave Le Neve-Foster

Engineers Dave Le Neve-Foster, Yanni Flood Page
Microphones AKG D202ES, E1, D290, D1200E, D12, C452, Calrec DM1050, Beyer M201, M88, Neumann U87, KM84
Desk Custom built Alice ACM

18/3/16 console
Tape machines Ampex MM1100 16/8 track, Studer B62
Outboard equipment Mayer RM68X gates, Audio and Design F769V-R vocal stresser, DBX RM160 com-

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Recent clients Clash gig, Freshly Layed Band gig, Pressups, Fringe Benefit, Richard Harvey for KPM.

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Address 38 Knowl Road, Golcar, Huddersfield HD7 4AN, West Yorkshire
Telephone 0484 658895/6
Engineers Bob Whiteley, Dave Whiteley
Capacity 45 musicians
Instruments available free Piano
Instruments available for hire Any
Microphones AKG, Neumann, Sennheiser, STC, Calrec, Electrovoice
Desk Sound Techniques
Tape machines Lyrec 16 track with varispeed and autolocate, 2 Ampex AG440 2 track
Outboard equipment Graphic equalisers, Pye and Neve limiter/compressors, Eventide

flanger
Echo facilities EMT echo plates
Copying facilities tape — tape, tape — cassette, cassette duplication
Rates £15 per hour
Hours of working 24 hours a day 7 days a week
Recent clients Brighthouse and Rastrick band, Roy Hill, Child, TV adverts
Special remarks Mobile recording facilities.

SMILE RECORDING STUDIOS

Address 59 Upper Chorlton Road, Manchester 16
Telephone 061 226 5369 - 962 4399
Studio Manager Steve Foley
Engineer Steve Foley
Capacity 25-30 musicians
Instruments available free String machine, synth, guitars, upright and grand pianos, Fender and Marshall amps, percussion and drums
Instruments available for hire Anything (Syndrums)
Microphones Sennheiser, Beyer, AKG, Calrec, Electrovoice
Desk Custom built Solus Systems 20 into 16
Tape machines Cadey 16 track, Revox stereo, Teac cassette
Outboard equipment HH tape

echo, Solus flanger, Solus compressor/expander, spring reverb
Echo facilities HH echo
Copying facilities Reel — reel, reel — cassette
Rates Introductory offer of £10 per hour plus tape and VAT
Recent clients Jilted John, Maddy Prior, Smirks, Ritz
Special remarks Specialist in record pressing and bulk cassette copying. Games room, spacious new premises.

SOUND CONCEPTION

Address 85 Ashley Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6
Telephone 0272 554721
Studio Manager Chris David
Engineers Chris David, Antony David, Kenny Wheeler
Capacity 12 musicians
Instruments available free Bass reflex bin, Bechstein grand piano
Microphones AKG 1000, D12, D707, D190, Shure Unisphere, Sennheiser MD431, Reslo
Desk Alice 16 in and 8 out
Tape machines Leevers Rich 1" 8 track, Revox and Teac stereo
Outboard equipment ITA stereo comp/limiter, 12 Alice limiters
Echo facilities Echoplex, Teac 3300, Echo room
Copying facilities Stereo tape machines, Aiwa cassette
Rates £75 per 10 hour day, £9 per hour.

SPACEWARD RECORDING STUDIO

Address 19 Victoria Street, Cambridge CB1 1JP, England
Telephone 0223 64263
Studio Manager Gary Lucas
Engineers Gary Lucas, Mike Kemp
Capacity 7 musicians
Instruments available free Gretsch drumkit, HH, Fender, Marshall guitar amps, Bose, Electrovoice speakers etc
Instruments available for hire Rhodes piano, Precision bass, minimoog, Hammond organ, Solina String synth etc
Microphones Neumann U87, KM84, Calrec CM051, CM1000, AKG D12, D190, Electrovoice DS35, RE10, RE11, RE16 and others: total 24 mics
Desk 17 into 8 into 2 Spaceward custom built
Tape machines Spaceward 2" 16 track (with full auto-logic and monitor switching), Studer B67, Revox A77 and B77 high speed, varispeed
Outboard equipment Reverb units, Eventide Harmonizer, Eventide Instant Flanger, Marshall Time Modulator, Audio and Design Vocal Stresser, noise gate, 4 band parametric sweep equaliser, compressors/limiters/filters etc

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Echo facilities Master Room Studio B, Revox A77 highspeed, Spaceward spring reverb

Copying facilities Neal 102 and 302 Dolby cassette decks, Sony U-Matic and Betamax video cassette recorders

Rates £110 per day, £10 per hour 16 track, £7.50 per hour 2 track

Hours of working 10am to 2am with 2 to 3 hours breaks, ie 12 to 14 hours actual work

Recent clients The Soft Boys, June Tabor, Stiff Little Fingers, Marmalade, Vanity Fair, The Wasps, The Users, XL5, Mandy Morton as well as artists from Norway, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and the USA

Special remarks We also have a PA rig available, toured Switzerland this year with the Albion Band.

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Address 14 Sebert Road, London E7 0NQ

Telephone 01-534 5472

Studio Manager John Bassett

Engineer Dave Godfrey

Capacity 8 musicians

Instruments available free Drums, piano, string synth, speaker cabinets

Instruments available for hire Anything

Microphones Neumann, Sennheiser, Calrec, AKG, Shure

Desk Allen and Heath

Tape machines Cadey, Revox, Teac

Outboard equipment Various

Echo facilities Roland space echo

Copying facilities Reel — reel, reel — cassette

Rates £9.50 per hour 8 track, £6.50 per hour 4 track

Recent clients Work for Independent TV, radio and record release.

STARTLING STUDIOS

Address Tittenhurst Park, London Road, Sunninghill, Berks

Telephone Ascot 20039/21184

Studio Manager Mike O'Donnell

Engineer Neil Kernon

Capacity 30 musicians

Instruments available free Fender Rhodes '88', Hammond C3, Arp 2500, Yamaha grand piano, church organ

Microphones AKG, Beyer, Neumann, Shure, Schoeps, Sennheiser

Desk MCI

Tape machines Studer A80 24 track, 2 track, Studer B62, 3M 4 track

Outboard equipment Eventide digital delay and harmoniser, Eventide flanger, 4 x DBX 120 compressors, 2 x LA1176 limiters, 4 x Rebis parametric equalisers, AMS phaser, Keepex. Gain Brains

Echo facilities EMT stereo plates, one live echo chamber

Rates £750 per day including food and accommodation

Special remarks Sauna, swimming pool, games room, 79 acres of parkland.

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Address 3 Waterloo Road, Stockport, Cheshire

Telephone 061-480 9711/2

Studio Manager Peter Tattersall

Engineers Dave Rohl, Chris Nagle, Martin Lawrence

Capacity 35 musicians

Instruments available free Steinway grand piano

Instruments available for hire Any

Microphones Neumann, AKG, Beyer, Sennheiser

Desk Helios 28 in 24 out

Tape machines Studer A80 VU 24 track and Studer stereo

Outboard equipment Dolby A, digital delays, Eventide harmoniser, DBX and Audio and Design limiters and compressors, Keepex units, parametric and graphic equalisers, Parasound De-Essers

Echo facilities EMT echo plates

Rates £35 per hour for 24 track, £30 per hour for 16 track, £20 per hour for stereo. £5 per hour surcharge after 6pm and at weekends

Recent clients 10cc, Barclay James Harvest, Piccadilly Radio, Radio Tees jingles.

STUDIO CORNET

Address Aachener Strasse 112, D-5000 Koln 40

Telephone 02234 75801

Studio Manager Wolfgang Hirschmann

Chief Engineer Wolfgang Hirschmann

Capacity Studio 1: 30, Studio 2: 10

Instruments available free Steinway grand piano, Hammond A100 organ, jangle-piano, Clavinet, Solina, vibes, xylophone, chimes, glockenspiel, timpani, percussion, guitar amps

Instruments available for hire Neupert cembalo, Minimoog, ARP Pro-Soloist, Korg Polyphonic synths

Microphones Neumann, AKG,



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 Tape machines Studio 1: Lyrec TR53 24/16 track 2" Studio 2: Lyrec TR53 16 track 2", 8 track 1"
 Echo facilities EMT 140 st., AKG BX20, time delay Lyrec TDV 2702
 Rates Studio 1 DM195, Studio 2 DM105. 25% surcharge after 10pm, 50% surcharge on Saturdays, 100% surcharge on Sundays and holidays.

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Telephone 01 371 5339

Studio Manager Yves Chamberland

Engineers C. Ermelin, R. Roche, W. Flageolet, P. Omnes

Capacity 100 musicians

Instruments available free Steinway Concert Grand

Instruments available for hire Fender piano, organ, all synthesizers

Microphones Neumann, AKG, Beyer, Shure

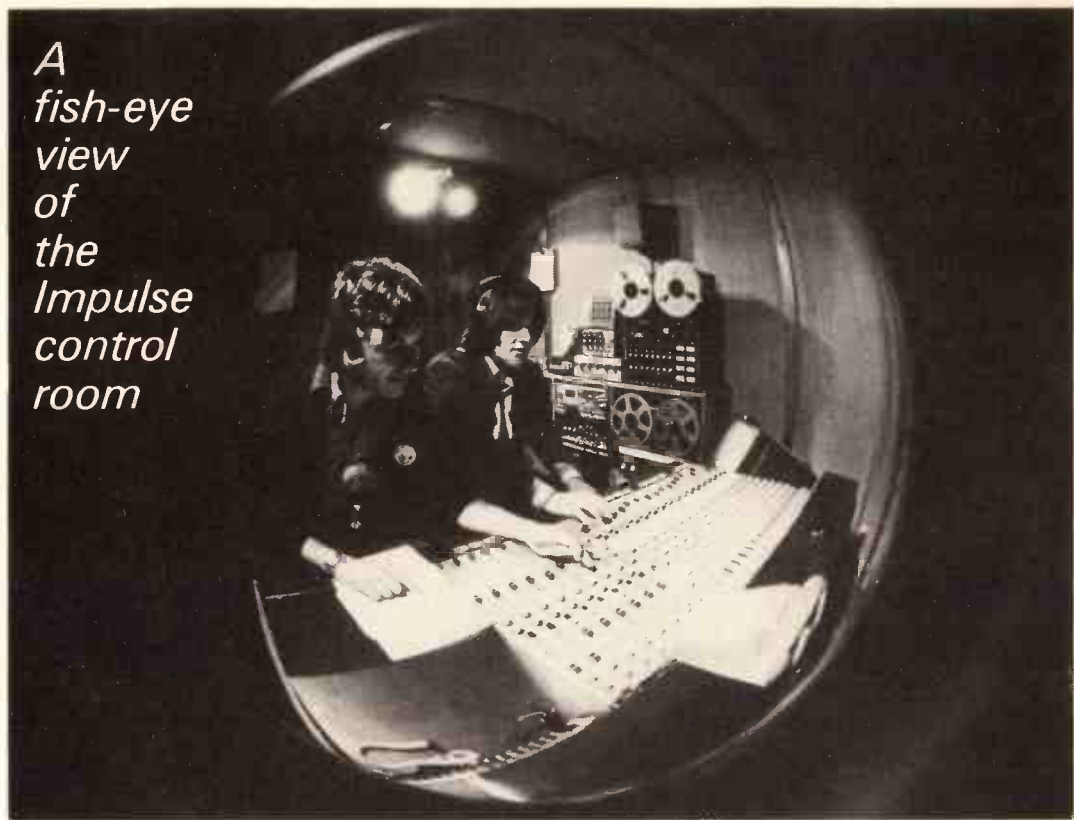
Desk Cadac

Tape machines 3M 24 track

Echo facilities Natural 6", EMT plate

Reduction suite Mixing room; 'Eastlake Audio'

Rates On application



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Engineers Mike Devereux, John Cooper, Roger Kennedy

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Instruments available free Fender Rhodes, Arbiter Autotune drums, combos, guitars, synthesizers etc

Instruments available for hire All free of charge

Microphones Neumann, AKG, Shure, Beyer, STC, Calrec

Desk Allen and Heath Mod 11

Tape machines Brenell Mini 8

Outboard equipment Scamp ADT, compressors, phasers, MXR graphic equalisers, limiters

Echo facilities Roland space echo

Copying facilities cassette, ¼ and ½ track reel — reel

Rates £58 per day (special package deal); £9 per hour during day, £12 per hour during night

Recent clients Advertis, jingles for Capital, LBC, Radio Victor, Southern TV. Bands include Joe Jackson, Staa Marx and many more.

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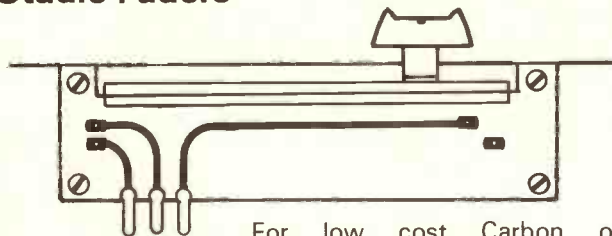


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Engineers John Richards, Dave Hunt, Dick Lewsey, Richard Goldblatt, Kenny Denton, Rafe McKenna, Kevin Metcalfe (disc cutting)

Capacity Studio 1: 125; 2: 40; 3: 20; 4: 10

Instruments available free Pianos

Instruments available for hire Any

Microphones Neumann KM84, KM86, U87, M49, AKG D24, D202, D224E etc

Desks Neve consoles in all studios; with NECAM automation in St. 3

Tape machines Studer A80, from mono to 24 track
Outboard equipment Flangers, phasers, harmonisers, parametric equalisers, Aphex etc

Echo facilities EMT plates and master room springs

Reduction suite All studios dual purpose

Copying facilities Copying room

Rates On application
Special remarks Disc cutting (Neumann), film and telecine facilities, licensed bar/restaurant, free car parking, own production company. The Kids are Alright — the Who, Bowie '78, Wishbone Ash.

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heiser, Shure, Electrovoice, STC, Sony
Desk Cadac 32/24
Tape machines 3M, Studer
Outboard equipment Full range of Urei, Eventide plus many other devices
Echo facilities EMT 140s
Reduction suite Equipped as

main control room with vocal overdub booth
Rates £45 per hour all operations Studio 1, £40 per hour all operations Studio 2
Hours of working 24 hours a day 7 days a week
Recent clients Motorhead, Three Degrees, Rumour, Public

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Telephone 0451 20172
Studio Managers Nigel King, Hugh Showring
Engineers Hugh Showring, Nigel King
Capacity 7 musicians
Instruments available free HH, Peavey, Fender amps
Microphones AKG, Shure
Desk ITA 10/4
Tape machines Teac A3340, Revox A77 with varispeed
Outboard equipment DBX, compressors, Pioneer reverb unit, Hitachi cassette deck
Echo facilities ADT unit, Revox tape echo
Copying facilities Not bulk
Rates £4.50 per hour
Hours of working 9am to 12pm but flexible
Recent clients Local new wave and rock bands, TV commercials and demos
Special remarks Accommodation also available.



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OVATION GUITARS

New England is aptly named. It's probably the closest you can get, landscape-wise (as they say over there) to the Old Country itself — cute, quaint li'l winding roads, plenty of trees, mild autumnal weather, and very English-style people too.

Your roving U.S. correspondent was musing upon all this whilst purring through the countryside in a 95-foot-long station wagon belonging to one Jim Hennessey. Hennessey is employed by Ovation in the capacity of Ad and Sales Promotion Manager and, on this occasion, as a tour guide. A tall, serious-minded fellow is Jim,

bearing a slight resemblance to Mr Spock, though his ears look human enough. And a nicer chap never tested God's earth, to be sure.

As we whizzed along leafy lanes towards New Hartford, the Connecticut town in which part of Ovation's manufacturing operation takes place, Jim outlined the history of the company.

It all began back in 1945. Charlie Kaman was an engineer working for a large aerospace company when he was suddenly inspired with a new idea for helicopter blades; this idea took such a grip on Charlie's imagination that he quit the firm and

set to work in his mother's garage with a \$2000 government grant in his pocket, and twenty years later he was a multi-millionaire. Well, O.K., there were a number of intermediate stages, but nobody wants to know how you make millions, do they? The fact is, Charlie had long been interested in guitar playing in his spare time — nothing more exciting than jazz big band chord-playing stuff, admittedly, but he had always been nagged by the feeling that there was never enough midrange in the guitars. And, being an engineer, he set out to try and fix the problem instead of just sitting there bitching about it...

Epoxy

Hennessey's car swung majestically into the car park adjoining a large nineteenth-century red-brick textile mill. This was the place. A few brief introductions, and we were on our way to view the entire process from A to Z.

Right, silence at the back of the class and let's get on with it. Each Ovation starts life as a double sheet of fibreglass, which looks and feels like shower curtain material. This is compressed at 400°F and at a pressure of 3500lbs per square inch with an oily black liquid which is composed of a mixture of resin, dye and catalyst. The shape of the press is of course the shape of the guitar bowl, and the substance of which this bowl is formed is known as Lyrachord — allegedly better than wood for its acoustic properties.

Why?

O.K. — it seems that the "roundback" idea and the use of synthetic material combine to produce a louder, purer and more distinct sound than wood because a) wood absorbs sound — it's porous, whereas Lyrachord isn't, and thus reflects the sound waves out of the sound hole; b) the lack of corners, back struts and braces means that the sound flows around more smoothly inside; and c) the vibrational qualities of Lyrachord are so accurately known that the tops (which are made of wood) can be acoustically matched.

Meanwhile, back in the factory, the internal heel for the neck and the support ring are glued and pressed into place with epoxy resin; elsewhere a substance called Laminac is used as adhesive. And that's pretty much it for the bowl.

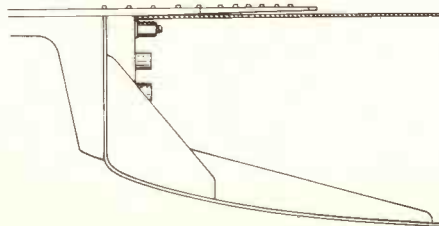
The tops are made from sitka spruce — an old idea. What is new is the way that the spruce is braced underneath. X-shaped braces are the traditional standard type, and Ovation still use them on their cheaper guitars. VT-bracing is used on the mid-price instruments, and as the name suggests this means that the struts run more longitudinally than laterally, and this allows the wood to flex more freely. The A-brace — the newest of the lot — is a further step again. A guitar top braced with one of these will flex quite considerably along its long axis, but be almost rigid from side to side. And the grain runs the same way as the flexing.

The necks are made from two large planks of mahogany pressed together with three lengths of maple, and each of these composite planks is sufficient for six necks, the shape of which are drawn on in pencil as a rough guide, then cut. A machine then carves the necks and buffs them with extraordinary precision, six at a time. The business of inserting the frets and the fingerboard inlays is not significantly different from that carried out at other guitar factories. What does differ is the degree to which each component of the guitar is complete before being joined with the rest. In other words, the checking and inspection is meticulous at every stage of construction, thus ensuring overall standards and minimizing wastage. Thus neck, body and top are all complete when joined, and this joining is the last process in the entire assembly. The top edge is in two steps to allow for a particularly wide binding strip, and abalone inlay on the more expensive models. And since the top is the only organic substance south of the neck, it is treated with special care — buffed many times both manually and mechanically. There's no pickguard — an area of hard, transparent polyester is applied below the sound hole so that the wood is not encumbered with the addition of a separate plastic plate.

Upstairs is the electrical section. Actually, this is the part that people are most interested in, since the quality of Ovation guitars that makes them sell so prodigiously is the fact that though they are constructed in a roughly similar way to other

The new Adamus guitar: expensive for all the right reasons, with its decorative but functional soundholes.

The neck block is integral with the bowl, reinforced by a main centre strut.



acoustics, most of them have built-in pick-ups, lead socket and volume/tone control. In other words, they are made for the performer who wants an acoustic sound he can plug into an amplifier. So how does this work?

The pick-ups are built into the bridge. There are six of them, or rather six piezo-electric elements, one at each string anchor point on the bridge saddle. These combine with the FET (Field-effect transistor) pre-amp inside the guitar bowl, the pre-amp being powered by batteries which are installed at the factory. Ovation reckon that these will last about a year, at which time new ones can be slotted in.

A variety of finishes can be obtained, though the vast majority of Ovations that reach this country have natural tops. Sunburst, red-top, nutmeg, white-top and black are the choices, though the latter has to be specially ordered for acoustic models.

But what about the Magnum bass, the Matrix range Applause guitars, and lastly the amazing Adamas? These are largely the product of another factory, this time in a town called Moosup, which is a short drive from New Hartford. And it was here that the eyes really started to open wide. This place is an awesome technological giant which not only makes guitars, but other products of Charlie Kaman's industrial empire: the nose cone for NASA's space shuttle and sections of the F-14 fighter plane are assembled next to bodies for the Applause guitars. Think about *that* next time you hold down a C9th chord.

Eyeballs

I was introduced to the amiable but plaster-footed (from a motorcycle accident) heir to the throne, Bill Kaman, who is in charge of Applause, Matrix and Adamas. Adamas guitars cost an average of \$2500 each, and are quite possibly the most beautiful looking guitars your open-mouthed reporter has ever clapped eyeballs on. They take the Ovation roundback revolution a way further; for a start, instead of a soundhole they have 22 sound-holes of different sizes clustered in two symmetrical groups on either side of the body's top end. The total area of these holes, which are a development of the old f-hole idea, is equal to that of the sound-hole on the conventional Ovations.

The top is made from two thin layers of carbon graphite sand-



... and the older stalwarts: the Balladeer (left) and the Breadwinner.

wiching a spruce veneer because, to quote Nick Mackin, the engineer responsible for this extraordinary project, "it's thinner, more flexible and more quality-controllable than a conventional birch top". The grain of the graphite runs straight along the guitar, whereas the spruce runs at an angle. Every part of the guitar top — and that includes the fancy wooden "epaulettes" around the soundholes — is weighed individually to ensure maximum vibration. Oh, and the multitude of holes is apparently because this arrangement is less prone to feedback than the traditional design.

The bodies are similar to Ovation bodies, with additional strength added to the heel block, and there is an access hole in the back to get at the electronics, which are inserted as one of the last stages of construction.

In short, the Adamas is a fearfully expensive guitar, but for all the right reasons. For a start, there were four years of research before the first guitar rolled off the production line. All that has to be paid for somehow. Then again, the actual labour, the stringent inspection standards involved and the sheer cost of the materials (seven different woods

are used for the epaulettes alone) mean that there's no way these things are ever going to be cheap. The same applies to Ovation guitars, in case you've ever wondered about the price of those. Man-hours of work have to be reflected in the eventual retail price of anything. It's entirely up to you whether you think it was worth it.

Conscious of this somewhat elitist image, the company have been researching ways of producing instruments more cheaply. Matrix was the result. A number of automated techniques, derived from the aerospace division, have been adopted to ensure a briefer production time for Matrix guitars. Obviously there is a slight reduction in quality, but what it does mean is that you can have a guitar which resembles Ovations just about as near as dammit for considerably less money — and you've got automatic sanding and buffing to thank.

The same feeling lies at the root of the Applause guitars. They are solid-bodied instruments, whose necks are made from a mixture of metal coated with baking enamel for the fingerboard and injection-moulded plastic. It's just a natural extension of the idea that

a guitar doesn't *have* to be made of wood that has led to the creation of the "Urelite", body. Urelite, according to the oscilloscopes, has a resonance and sustain to equal that of wood, and it won't crack or split so easily either.

"It's the low end of the market," Nick Mackin said. "We're catering for the beginner, and we're competing directly with the Japanese and the Koreans for a share of that market. To do this we had to adopt a new approach to building them — what costs money is man-hours, and by taking the man-hours *out* of the process we can produce a cheaper instrument. Some of these Applause guitars only retail at about \$160."

So there we are — the Kaman Corporation is working for both the superstar and the penniless punter. That same evening Jim Hennessey and myself went to a Bob Dylan gig in Springfield, Massachusetts; Jim was hoping to show an Adamas to the Great Zim himself. At the Sound-check Zimmo stroked his chin and walked away. Jim shrugged philosophically. Why should he worry? He's already shown three to the rest of the band ... □



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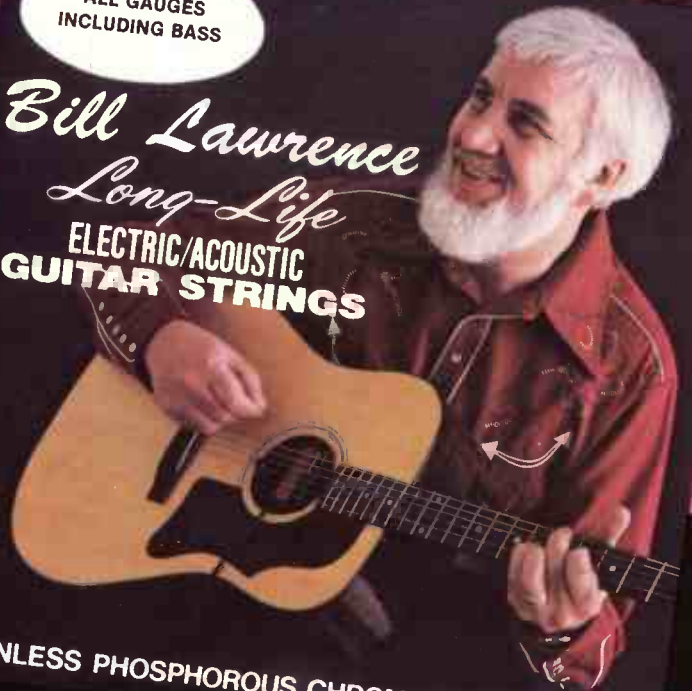
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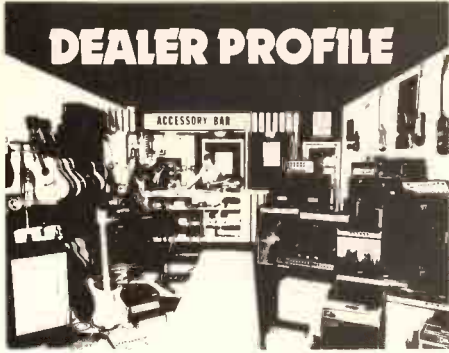
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DEALER PROFILE



GIG CENTRE Gravesend

It isn't often that we get a chance to visit a shop that has only been going for six weeks. It's even more seldom that we can walk (or stagger) out a few hours later feeling that the future, both for the shop and the local musicians, will be long and rosy.

Gig Centre, in Gravesend's Windmill Street, left precisely that impression and on the face of it there are two obvious reasons. First of all, the shop nestles under the comforting umbrella of the Hodges and Johnson organisation, and while the shop itself has only swung its doors open a few dozen times Hodges and Johnson have been going for over thirty years, currently boasting many retail outlets both in the group and mums and dads fields.

Secondly, manager Andy Dungate is a well-travelled musician himself — still keeping his hand in despite setting up the shop — and therefore has a very accurate picture of the local music scene and the kind of service musicians are after.

"We sell gear and we can get anything on order," he explained. "Obviously that's the main thing. But more than that, I want

the shop to become a local meeting point for musicians. It sounds corny, but if they are not buying immediately they are still welcome to come in, try gear, talk, whatever they want. Once musicians get the idea that it's worth popping in for whatever reason we can assume that trade will take care of itself on a word of mouth basis."

But stock always has to be the main attraction, and Gig Centre have crammed plenty into the premises. On the amp side they have secured agencies for HH, Rose-Morris, J & C ("a new PA from up North"), Roland and Yamaha and the floorboards buckle under the appropriate models. The fact that Andy is personally taken with most of the shop's lines is no coincidence, and his blessing goes with most of the



▲ "Our mutual friend" Geoff Whitehorn jams with manager Andy Dungate — but why is he smiling?



many guitars on display as well.

Here it is the turn of the ceiling to buckle under assorted acoustics, semi-acoustics, copy solids and name solids: Gibson, Rickenbacker, Aria, Guild, Jedson, CSL, Eko, Columbus and Ibanez are a few of the names that trip comfortably off the tongue.

Poached

Space doesn't allow Andy to stock more than a smattering of keyboards, but remember that a well-stocked warehouse ordering equipment for nine or ten shops is always in the background, so a keyboard player who knows what he's about wouldn't run into any great problems there. Drums lose out altogether, but Andy was quite prepared to admit that with a specialist drum shop quite nearby he didn't feel he would be able to seriously compete. That's what we were hinting at at the beginning; the Gig Centre knows exactly what they are likely to sell and what clientele they should build up.

Despite it being the only band shop in Gravesend, Andy only envisages about thirty percent of his customers coming from the town. The rest, he confidently predicts, will be drawn from the Medway area generally and even poached from London. At the moment the nearest competition in Bromley and Maidstone, so there's no reason why Gig Centre's radius should not be an expansive one.

Lark

But musicians will know that being short of a jackplug is as much of a crisis — and probably a more frequent one — as needing a new backline, and Gig Centre accordingly stocks all the accoutrements: strings (Rotosound naturally sells steadily), effects ("MXR, Roland, Re-An bits and pieces, and we can get hold of stuff like Colorsound") and even Mighty Mite and di Marzio pickups.

And "to pay for the tea money" Gig Centre do sheet music "Elton John, Deep Purple, that sort of lark" and plaster the front door with musicians' adverts. Don't too many adverts steal business, we ventured? "Well, they've got to come to the shop to see them," explained Andy, "and while they're here..."

Another business and goodwill drummer-upper is the annual competition for musicians held at the local Woodville Halls, and Andy is also hoping to reinstate gigs there as a regular event.

So, we might as well round up by pointing a finger in the direction of the second-hand (or trade) department and the repairs service. If it's a small job, they do it on the premises — it's a big job, Andy extends a loan of another piece while the offender is fixed at leisure.

Even more to the point, Andy is a Chelsea fan. So if you want to try out a new Gibson, gulp down a cuppa and chew the cud over the golden days of The Boys In Blue all at once, well — Gravesend's the place to head for. □



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It's a fact that each studio is, at one and the same time, essentially similar and dissimilar to the next one. A studio's raison d'être is, after all, to record music, but it's the ways in which individual establishments go about performing this function which create the all-important differences.

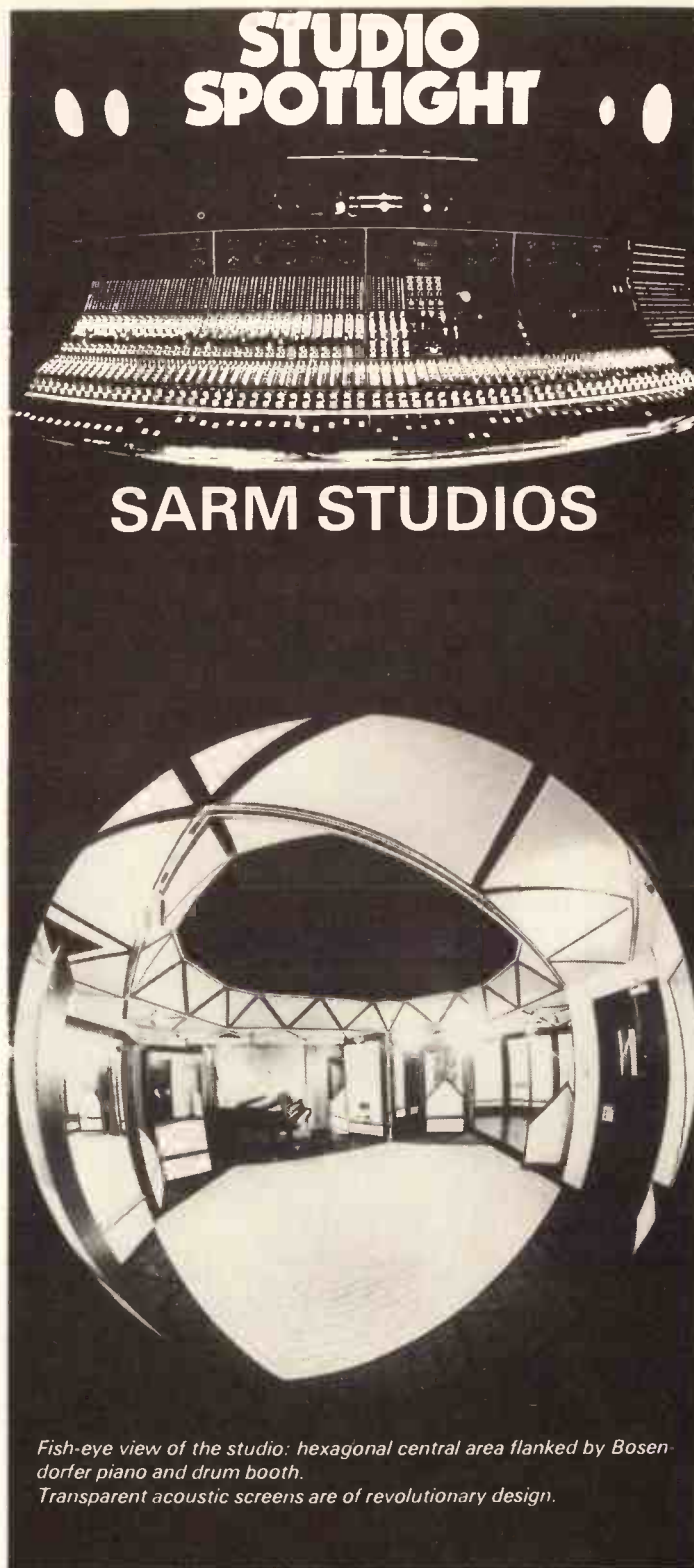
Sophistication

The subject of this month's 'Spotlight' for example can point to a number of varying factors to distinguish itself from the crowd. It's the first purpose-built 48 track studio in Great Britain: that fact, in itself, makes Sarm a special case, giving it that extra pull necessary when aiming for the prestigious client. (Sarm was, incidentally, the country's first purpose built 24-track when it opened in 1973). The level of technical sophistication within the studio leaves a lot of would-be competitors standing in the starting blocks — not least because a young engineer Jim Smith employed more mundanely as a tape op. has a habit of designing and building new 'toys' when his exact requirements are not met by commercial products. The studio's decor is essentially futuristic and the attention to detail throughout is painstakingly excellent. It is not, however, any of these factors which endeared us irrevocably to the studio. Yes, you've guessed, it's that good old intangible — atmosphere.

Personality

Sarm breathes personality from the moment you walk in — either the offices conveniently sited just across the road, or the studio itself. Sarm spent five years building up this atmosphere, reputation and personality — Queen, Elton John and David Essex are amongst its genuinely regular clients — only to find them dashed eight months ago when a fire in the studio lobby caused extensive damage. The over-enthusiastic firemen wound up their hoses leaving Sarm with an uninvited five inch deep lake throughout the building.

Obviously a decision had to



Fish-eye view of the studio: hexagonal central area flanked by Bosendorfer piano and drum booth. Transparent acoustic screens are of revolutionary design.

be made quickly, and the Sinclair family (who own and run the company in a delightfully intimate manner) took the plunge (no pun intended) and decided that rather than re-emerge with a patch-up job they may as well come back with as close to the ultimate as possible. As things

have turned out, the decision has proved to be the right one. So, first things first and the entire studio/control room/kitchen/tape library/etc. was stripped and gutted, and the re-build begun from bare walls and ceiling. The results are a testament to the genius of the designer Peter Sarony.

The studio room, although relatively small, has emerged as a flexible and deceptively versatile recording area. Each individual piece of rock-well is suspended from the ceiling — part of the attention to detail we mentioned earlier. The studio's colours, green and black with fawn, are in evidence everywhere, and everywhere black meets black there's a small strip of green. The carpet proclaims the studio's name: Large mirrors on one wall create the impression of space as well as providing excellent sight-lines to the large drum booth normally out of sight of the control room.

Sculpture

A beautiful nine foot six-inch, black Bosendorfer concert grand dominates one end of the studio (until your eye is inevitably caught by an intriguingly erotic brick sculpture by Walter Ritchie which is used as a soundboard for the piano.) The central area is brick-floored and very live — helped by the wooden ceiling. The drum booth, floated on neoprene, is very large and provides a second live recording area.

The acoustic screens are of particular interest. They stand about six feet high; the bottom third is heavily baffled while the top consists of angled perspex which not only deflects sound into the baffles but also provides perfect vision. They can be linked together to form vocal booths in any position in the studio without locking the vocalist away. An excellent and essentially simple innovation which, Studio Manager Jill Sinclair told us "allows unbelievable separation."

Capability

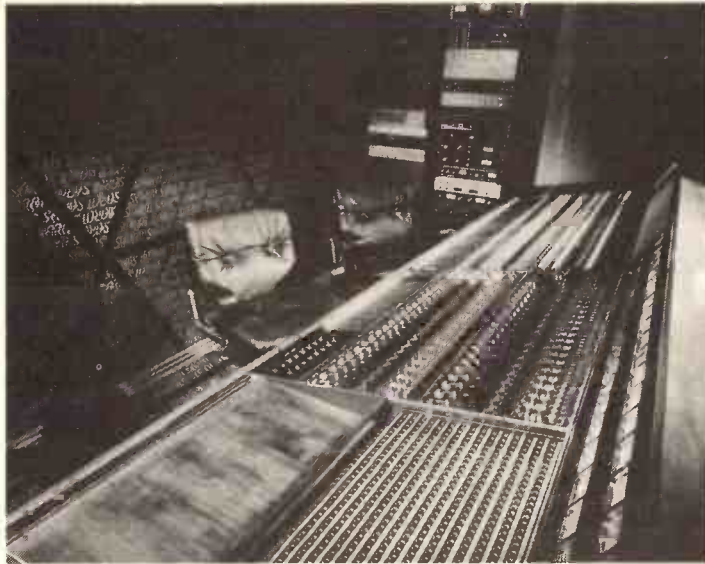
The window through to the control room has also been enlarged and the deflection angle changed slightly and the view both ways is excellent.

Dominating the control room is the Trident TSM console — 40in/40out with 24 groups — Trident's largest effort to date. The monitor channels on the desk are equipped with their own EQ capability, auxiliary send and panning functions and have the extra bonus of being routable direct to the quad-stereo buss which in fact turns the console into an 80 input monster during mixing!

At the far end of the control room is the 'toy rack' — designed in-house. Although it's designed to house normal 19" racking units it differs from the normal by being removable. The whole rack slides forward on rollers allowing for easy access to any module which requires attention. The contents of the rack are in line with the studio's technical reputation: Kepex noisegates, Eventide DDL, Phaser, Flanger, Marconi Limiters, Teletronix levelling amps, dbx compressor/expanders, Marshal Tim Modulator, Eventide Harmonizer, Aphex Aural Exciter — the list is endless. Monitoring is by two Cadacs installed overhead.

Quality

'What about tape recorders?' might be the next cry. Don't worry, they're neatly installed in an ante-room off the side of the control room. Two Studer 24-track A80 Mk11s sit smartly side-by-side. Echo, provided by EMT Digital and Master Room echo units plus an EMT plate, is also of the highest quality.



Massive Trident TSM 40/40 dominates the control room. "It's this personality angle which really swung us into believing Sarm is among the very, very top studios we've visited."

Re-tracing our steps (after a few unpublishable jokes with the effusive Gary Langan, Sarm's chief engineer) we came back through a corridor (lined with framed album sleeves of

previous successes) to a neat reception area. A door leads into the copying room where two Studer two tracks sit either side of a Triad Fleximix 8 in 2 out mixer. On the way out (or in) is

the kitchen, small but effective, and Sarm offer food to order at any time of day or night, (although with Blooms very close by the competition is pretty fierce.)

Functions

Across the road in the offices, we chatted to Jill Sinclair. Had the conversion really been successful?

"Yes," was the uncompromising reply. "The real Juck was in being able to move all the administrative functions to these offices, and also the fact that many of the staff remained loyal during the eight months we were off the air." Sarm is a labour-intensive operation — nine people fully employed in a small studio means that no-one can wander around feeling lost or in search for something without meeting one of them after taking only a few steps — and it's this personality angle which really swung us into believing Sarm is among the very, very top studios we've visited. It's *that* good.

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When in Rome do as the Romans do become When in Paris do as the Parisians do for our visit to Studios Davout. On a personal level the old adage meant acclimatising to the smell of garlic, thrilling to the sight of an embryonic James Hunt (very fast but not very safe) behind every steering wheel and glancing eagerly at the wine shops flying past the window. On a professional level it meant taking one of France's leading recording complexes in the context of the country's music industry, not only logging their equipment roll but getting an idea of the way the inmates approach their work.

Occupied

The first two impressions of the place were distinctly odd in the nicest possible way. The studio, tucked away at number 73 Boulevard Davout in the south of the city, hides behind a strangely nondescript — almost shabby — front: inside, however, no less than four studios are to be found, three recording and one mixdown. The second surprise, even more of an eyebrow raiser, was that all four studios were occupied and very busy at the time of our visit. Aren't they all? you might murmur, remembering past promises of bulging booking ledgers. The answer in no. You'd be surprised at how many top London studios you can visit — and stay the day without seeing so much as an off-duty roadie on the premises.

Once the deceptive amount of acreage behind the front doors had become apparent, it became equally apparent that the 'hello, nice to see you, any chance of a coffee?'s would

have to stop and that a bit of legwork would have to commence. With Dominique Durand acting as guide and link man, we made for the hub of the complex, the re-mix suite.

Engineer William Flageolet flicked a switch to kill the tape and swung around to face the notebook. "Most of Davout's remixing is done in here", he explained, "with about 20% outside work. Some tapes even come from outside France, but this is generally when a French producer has recorded in England. Studios Davout have been going for fifteen years but the re-mix suite in its present form is only two years old. It was also a re-mix suite before".

Like much of Studios Davout no lesser figure than Tom Hidley

of Eastlake furnished the design; the equipment, by the same token, was only the best and plenty of it. Before we go on to list it, however, it is as well to refer to the intangible but nevertheless ever-present feeling in Davout that the familiar self-conscious image of, well, *flash*, is not present at all. No feet on the console, no fur-piled carpets.

William leant back and the light caught the centre of attraction, a 28 input Cadac desk. "Twenty four direct outputs, 4 for re-mix, 7 sub-groups", he intoned, waving around the desk. "Eight echo sends ... we have a natural echo room here designed by Tom ... also 2 EMT plates. Echo is as you like it. Anyway, you can take echo from any of the studios ... 12 echo returns on the desk ... "Echo is no problem then(!)

Eastlake

He's also got more toys packed away to the left of the desk than you'd find on the ground floor of Hamley's during the Christmas sale. Take it away, William; "24 Dolby A, phaser, parametric EQ, delay flanging by Loft, an American company, 4 Keepex with more noise gates expected soon, autophaser, filter/limiter, Lexicon digital delay, Eventide harmoniser, Aphex Aural Exciter, Urei Teletronix LA-3A, UA limiters, EMT PDM compressor, Publison comp/limiters".

The monitoring again bears

the Hidley Eastlake stamp, bi-amplified by Crown DC300A: two facing the console in elegant horn-like wooden casing, and two more behind should Quad intrude in the future. A pair of Auratones complete the speaker picture. All the tape machines were Ampex, the main beast being 24 track with one 16 and one 24 head. Besides that nestles one ADR 100 2 track, and one 2 or 4 track with varispeed. Another reinforcement is expected shortly.

The final cherry in the re-mix suite is a Sony Videocassette recorder and screen to take care of the large proportion of sounds to picture work that they get. Michel Legrand, working at that moment in the cavernous Studio A, has completed a video there for Japan and, announced a straight-faced William, "James Bond is booked in for April." In the old days nearly all their work was based around movie picture soundtracks; it has fallen now to a well packed 25 per cent.

Back to Dominique and on to Studio A. As its nominal capacity is 100 musicians, Legrand and band were lost in one corner, hammering out a swinging jazz number which didn't sound as if it would need too much attention in the over-dub department. A 24 track Raindirk console straddles the control room, which in turn enjoys a fine vantage point with an uninterrupted view of the vast studio floor.

They have a few compressors



and the like in there but the general idea is for tapes to pass on to the re-mix suite, so an enormous line-up is not vital. The room adjoining the control room houses a 35mm projector, aimed laser-like into the studio.

Cozy

Right — Studio B. This is the small, cozy one, and was accordingly filled to the rafters with authentic french rockers. Engineer Philip Omnes sat huddled beneath the sprawling bodies, and beneath him — a 24 track Automatic Processes. Hidley did the planning here. Toys (here we go again), to name a few: Teletronix and Spectra-Sonic compressors and, take our word for it, a few more which we were unable to examine as sessions in Davout don't stop for a notepad. Quite right too.

There the main tape machine had been provided by 3M. In the studio itself, just room for the average size band.

Brass

Back to Dominique and on to Studio C ("the middle size"). Once more it was onto tiptoes as a brass section loosened up in readiness for the red light. There the console was Cadac again — 28 in 24 out, and the tape machine a 24 track 3M, garnished with a Sonaplan XT14 Autolocate. Once again, the monitoring was from Eastlake, and Dolby, Revox. Publison and Crown equipment filled out the rest of the space. "Studio C is roughly divided into three parts", explained Dominique, waving towards the booths at the back.

On the subject of in-house instruments, detailed lists for each studio don't really apply as most of the gear can informally shift from one to another. Studio A boasts a Steinway concert grand (this presumably isn't so mobile), and smaller versions in B and C. Other instruments taken in by a quick swivel of the eyeballs were two Hammond organs, a couple of Fender Rhodes and a harpsichord.

Cadac in the re-mix suite (left). Right, from the top: Studio B control room; the drum booth in Studio B with an English message on the tom; awaiting the red light in Studio C; more knobs to twiddle, this time in the Davout mobile. Extreme right; vocals time in Studio B.



(Was that Daquin or Couperin being played a fraction too fast?)

Time for a coffee after that lot, we thought, but no — Dominique plucked at the magazine's sleeve and we blinked back into the French sunlight (much like ours actually) to cast the peepers over the Davout mobile. "It isn't the Rolling Stones", he admitted candidly, swinging open the doors of a Citroen van parked casually on the kerb. Olympia, the country's main music hall, is frequently visited by the mobile. Stoneslike it may not be, but 40 inputs with direct output for 24 tracks is 40 inputs with direct output for 24 tracks in anybody's book.

Counterparts

Their rates in A, C and the re-mix suite are 700F (about £87 per hour) or 10,000F per two days and in B 400F per hour (about £50). This may seem steep in comparison to nearly all British studios, but it also undercuts many of their European counterparts.

"There are hundreds of kitchen studios all over Paris", grumbled William back in the re-mix suite, "and they take up a lot of the work". (Funny, Davout looked pretty busy that day). "We do get some of their tapes, though, because they need the kind of mixing room we have to get the right sound. Although France has never been in the forefront of the rock music industry, we now have a few people singing in English and we export some of our stuff. Don't forget French disco. What could we offer English or American bands? The French sound". What is the French sound? "It is (and here you must fall back on the authentic pronunciation) different".

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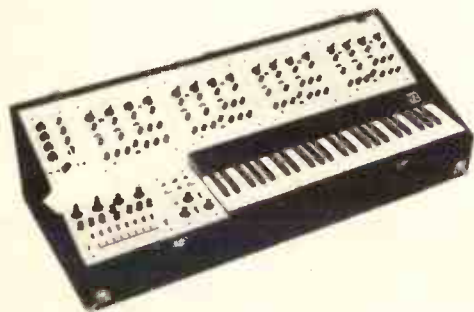
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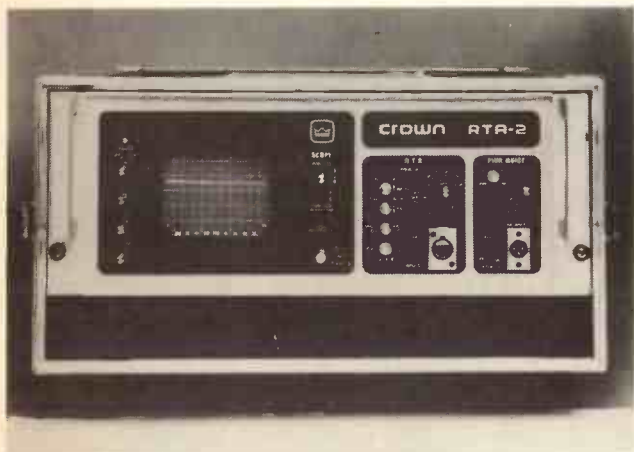
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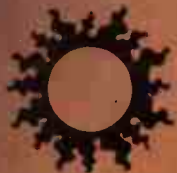
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