

BEAT

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INSTRUMENTAL

♯Songwriting & Recording

**GALLAGHER:
THE RORY
DETAILS**

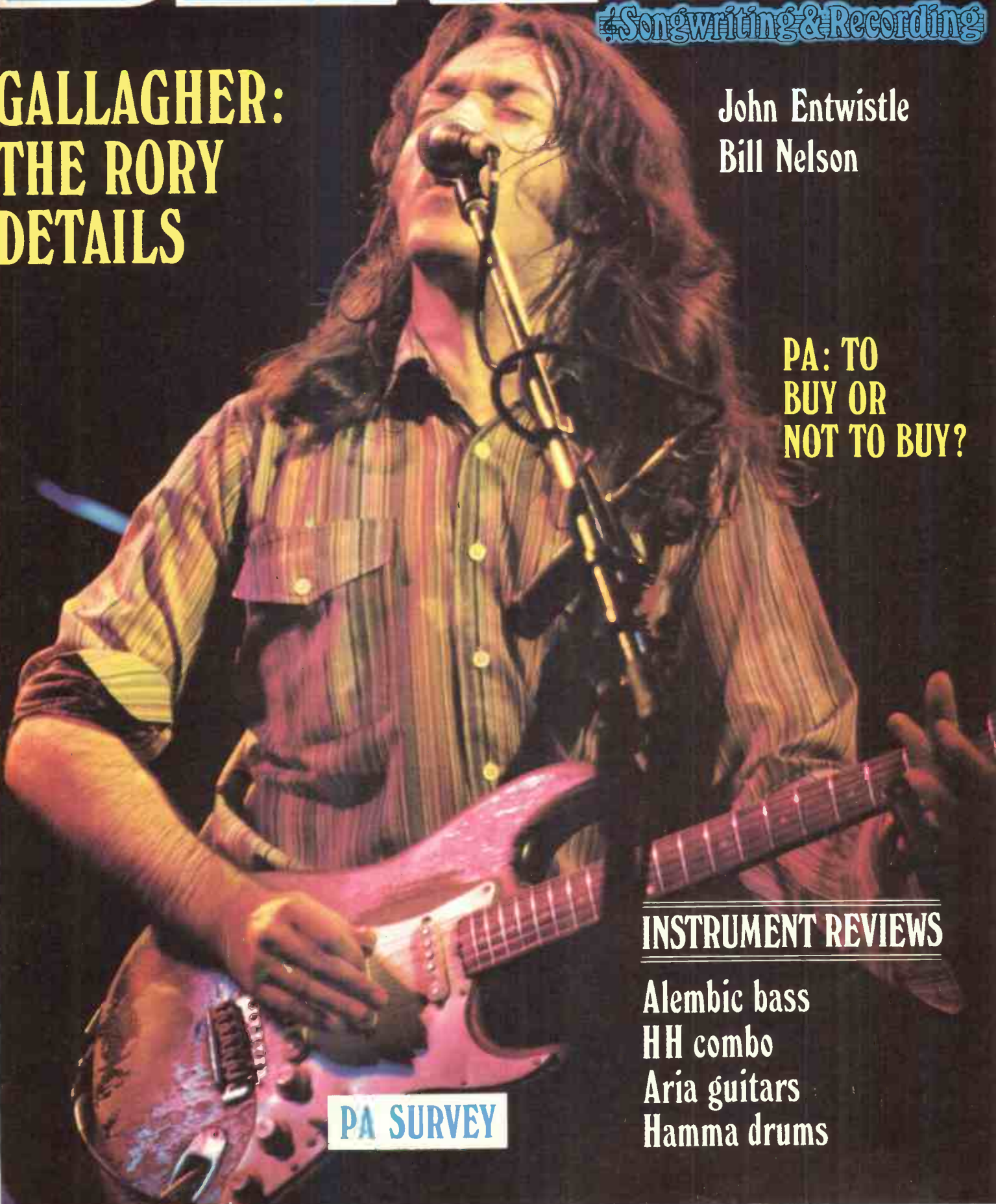
John Entwistle
Bill Nelson

**PA: TO
BUY OR
NOT TO BUY?**

INSTRUMENT REVIEWS

Alembic bass
HH combo
Aria guitars
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PA SURVEY



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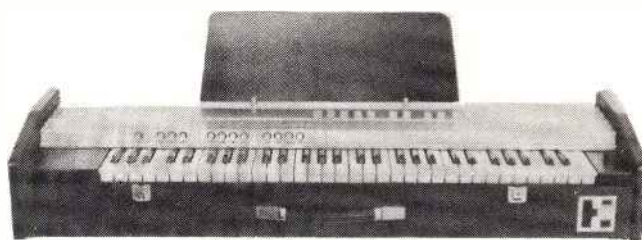
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time to time, his main axes are Rickenbackers — some 4007s of course — favourite being a vintage circa '66 model fitted out with Rotosound RS-66 strings. As you also seem to know, he goes through Marshall and Sunn amps, generally favouring full treble and presence settings, and roughly half volume, bass and midrange.

Among his effects, although these are always subject to change, are a modified Cry Baby wah wah that allows a certain amount of the natural bass signal to come through, custom built tremolo, reverb and muter units, a Maestro Brass Master (which serves as a fuzz box), a Compact phaser pedal and a set of DuTron bass pedals for deep, sustained bass notes underneath the moving lines he plays on the bass itself.

When you get into the realms of custom built units it becomes even more difficult to duplicate a particular guitarist's sound. Should you learn piano or guitar? Difficult to say. It depends how musical you are, and if you have the ability to grasp the 'form' by merely listening to albums. Are you able to distinguish particular styles and rhythms? If not, learning the basics probably would help. Merely copying someone else's bass lines doesn't make you good, although you probably needed a basic amount of skill to be able to do this.

As we've said so often before, nick a little bit here and there and then throw it all into your own melting pot to develop your style. All of this would happen much more quickly if you jammed with others or got into a band. Buy cheap gear for the time being and see how you go.

Young Crawler

Dear Beat,

Firstly I must compliment you on your fine magazine. It is truly the most informative on the market. I was wondering what sort of equipment Angus Young of AC/DC uses. Also how long has Geoff Whitehorn of Crawler been playing and how does he get that fantastic tone out of his guitar? Hoping you can oblige.

D. Old,
Glasgow.

Angus Young plays a cherry red 1969 Gibson SG through Marshall 100 watt stacks and, of course, his radio transmitter/receiver, enabling him to play from anywhere without a lead. The transmitter is still a long way from the production line, however. Geoff has been playing guitar for around fourteen years if you take it back to his first Rosetti from the obligatory favourite aunt.

In his current guitar collection is a '63 Telecaster and a '58 Gibson 335, but his main axe is a '62 Stratocaster with a Tele maple neck and Gibson frets. Geoff has helped himself to two extra sounds by re-wiring his toggle connections to give himself five standard positions and dispensing with the old Strat halfway house trick.

As to amps, he's yet another Marshall man, with a 50 watt Hiwatt for the studio. Not even Geoff could give you an encyclopaedic dissertation on how he gets his tone. He studied the blues form in depth and makes sure that he sustains like hell — that's probably half the battle, and following Paul Kossoff in the band no doubt also helped to keep him on his toes.

Info trouble

Dear Sir,

Help! I am desperately trying to find a particular make of Carlsbro amplifier. It is an old

valve model that they stopped making, with two channels, built in reverb and tremelo (tremelo operated by foot switch); a 100 watt model. Is there anywhere you know of that still has these amps for sale? Its full title is Carlsbro CS100TR. Any info, much appreciated.

M. Rowen,
Harrogate,
North Yorkshire.

Carlsbro stopped making this particular model about five years ago, and therefore the only place you'll find one — if you're lucky — is in the second hand columns. If you do ever find one, though, Carlsbro have spare parts and will service it if it is in reasonable condition. They will also be able to supply a circuit diagram if you want one.

OK Squire

Dear Beat,

How does Chris Squire achieve that growling yet crystal-clear sound on Fragile, Close To The Edge, The Yes Album etc? The only distortion I have achieved is something of a cross between an electric

shaver and an angry bee. Admittedly I haven't really tried good basses and amps because I'm only a penniless 16 year old amateur.

While you're still with me. I'd like your advice on some of my problems. Firstly, I play bass but would you suggest that learning a piano or guitar will give me a musical understanding that bass alone will not? Secondly, I've been playing bass to myself for just over a year and a half, copying from the music of Chris and Jon Camp of Renaissance. I tell myself that I am good because of this, but do you consider these to be false values? I've never been in a band because I'm too young to pull the money together to get the kit I want (ie Ricky bass and Sunn amp) and I live in a musical backwater.

W. Gammage,
West Haddon,
Northants.

Chris Squire's sound comes from two sources; technique (which, by definition, anyone would be pressed to imitate accurately) and excellent gear, which you say you can't afford yet. Although he uses other guitars like a Thunderbird from



Chris Squire: Rickenbackers took him close to the edge.

Eek — oh

Dear Beat,

I have been playing guitar for just over two years and have recently ventured into playing live in pubs and small social clubs. My problem is trying to achieve the right sound.

I recently bought an Eko Ranger six string with fitted pick-up. At this stage it is the best guitar I've owned and although I'm pleased with it I long to gain a better sound. I'm trying to get a clean acoustic sound using an HHVS 100 combo with a pair of Goodman 100 horns. When I practice at home the natural acoustic sound is quite pleasant but the same thing through the amp totally changes and sounds more like an electric guitar.

When I bought the Eko I was led to think that the pick-up would produce a natural sound only louder — not so! I have tried many makes of strings and am interested in the Bill Lawrence electric acoustic range. Are these what they seem to be? Also, when I changed the strings I was curious to see that the bottom E was connected to the wirings from the p/u. Is this normal practice and could you tell me why?

Can you give me any advice on how to obtain a more acoustic sound when using an amp — or tell me of any products on the market that help to overcome this problem? Thanking you for your help — keep up the good work.

P. Attard,
Cardiff.

Blimey mate, you've given us most of the work this month! Actually it will probably disappoint you to learn of the reason for your problem: The Eko Ranger is fitted with a magnetic pick-up — i.e., an electric guitar type p/u — and as a result, it sounds like an electric guitar when played through an amp. It's meant to sound like that and there's not a fat lot you can do about it, frankly! Still, you do say you were 'led' to believe otherwise: perhaps the shop you bought it from could possibly bend over backwards and see if they could compromise on a trade — in price?

OK, though, let's suppose you want to keep the Eko: it's a fine, cheap guitar and at this stage you're probably not into the idea of chopping it for another. You must therefore, purchase another pick-up of the transducer type made especially for amplifying acoustic guitars. There's quite a choice on the market at the moment so try products from Di Marzio, Lawrence, Ashworth, or Barcus Berry. Likely cost of this addition lies between £20 and £30. All of these will improve the natural acoustic sound when amplified quite dramatically — it's essential however, to try the lot to find the one best suited to your own taste. If you've got more money available we'd heartily recommend the Kelsey — which is a transducer microphone — which we found gave the very best results we've ever heard. It does however cost around £60 and you'd probably find it necessary to invest in a d.i. booster as its output is quite low.

So, what else is there? We don't have much knowledge of the Bill Lawrence strings in particular, but we think you'll agree your problem doesn't lie in the

string field. The bottom E string of your Eko is connected to the p/u wiring simply as an earth. On electric guitars the earth is supplied by the metal tailpiece etc., but on your model it's necessary to wire in this fashion to eliminate humming. If you want to talk ultimates, then for amplifying an acoustic guitar we'd plump straight for a French Amplifier called the 'Charlie' manufactured by Musique Industries, 6 Rue Rossignol-Dubost, 92230 Gennevilliers, France but this would cost you a whole packet of bread as we reckon the price will be way over £500 by the time you've imported it yourself! Lastly, there's the Ovation electric/acoustic range (which incidentally have recently dropped in price) which might be where you're heading if you insist on acoustic amplification as your role in the music scene.

This Wasp won't sting

Dear Sir,

I am wondering if you can give me any basic information about buying a synthesizer. I am a complete beginner with keyboards but I know about the different makes and types. I have no more than £300 in my pocket and have been looking at Korg, Wasp, Hohner and Yamaha models — especially the CS10. I would be grateful if you could advise me which is the best value for money, and the best for a beginner. I have been to several shops but they have not helped me much with this problem.

John Broome,
Darley Abbey,
Derby.

'No more than £300' — haven't you counted it recently? How much have you got in the bank? What's your credit rating? Actually, as it happens, less than £300 is sufficient to get started on the synthesizer trail nowadays. With that sort of loot you really only have two choices — the Yamaha or the Wasp. Much has been written — in Beat and numerous other magazines — about the Wasp and it's undoubtedly worth a very serious look. At a whisker under £200 it could be regarded as the perfect answer for 'the complete beginner with keyboards' as you could invest £100 in a combo and be set for the road. However, this com-

plete beginner's bit is an interesting point: what the Wasp won't give you is any idea of the feel of a real keyboard. That touch sensitive metal plate requires a whole different style of finger techniques — easy for an established keyboard player to adapt to, and easy enough for a beginner to learn on: but you'll find the transition to the real thing excruciatingly difficult.

The CS10 can now be had for around the £250 mark if you shop very carefully indeed, and at the price it is a competitor in its own right. It provides a real keyboard to get you started on and would eventually fit in well with a multi-keyboard set-up. Soundwise, the Wasp provides probably the fatter and fuller with a few more variations, but the Yamaha's not far behind. It's really your choice now — and if you're penny conscious, the Wasp does represent a significant saving. Don't get stung for full retail price on the CS10 though!

String along

Dear Beat,

First of all, congratulations on

producing far and away the best magazine on the market. As I am currently in the process of considering a complete brand image for my strings, it crossed my mind that they are the one thing you never review. No doubt you'll point out difficulties in reviewing strings, but couldn't you find a way of catalogueing the comments of well known guitarists in a type of review.

R. Brown,
Nottingham.

You're right — we will point out a few difficulties. The main one is that you can't review strings unless they are attached to a guitar and preferably played through an amp too. That means that you will be enjoying the benefits of the guitar, pickups and amplifier besides those of the strings. Just taking the guitar by itself, height of action etc. all play a great part in determining the resultant sound.

Comments on stringing usually crop up in our interviews, and if you keep pace with them you'll gradually form a picture of what people use to meet particular styles and requirements. And, of course, every now and then we print a String Survey. OK?

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right
down
to the
basics!



The Marshall 4150 Bass Combo

Designed to complement the new country and club combos, the 4150 is an entirely new bass combo, which features an all valve 100W amplifier driving into 4 x 10" (25.40 cm) 50W Celestion speakers for a tight, punchy bass sound. Never before has the bass player had such control over his sound with treble, bass, mid-range boost, and sweepable mid-range controls, compression, and mid-high presence circuit for a really superb sound. As with all the club and country range, the 4150 is finished in brown oak leathercloth with straw coloured speaker fret.

Rich, Rangy & Raunchy.



The Marshall 4145 Combo

For the musician who wants the facilities and easy operation of the versatile 4140, with that something extra, the new Marshall 4145 is *the* combo. Utilising the same amp section as the 4140, this combo has four 50W 10" (25.40 cm) Celestion speakers for a rich, but biting sound which will please the most discerning of musicians.

Please send me more information about Marshall Combos.

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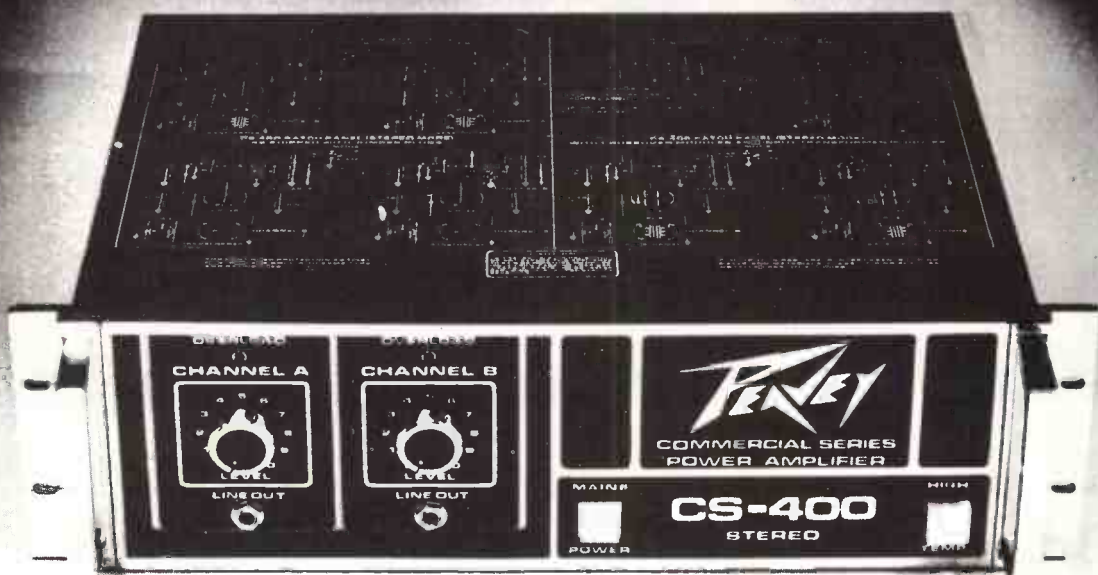
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Illusion may be a new one on you. They have made only two albums, *Out Of The Mist* and *Illusion*, and have been forced out of necessity to maintain what is known as a low profile. Their music, for reasons which the roots of the band will make abundantly clear, has no obvious niche in the current climate and they will therefore have to see what they can do in America and Germany.

Their vocalist/rhythm guitarist/percussionist Jim McCarty may also be a new one on some of you. Older readers, however, will recall that Jim was the drummer with a little outfit called the Yardbirds —

JIM McCARTY: THE YARDBIRD SINGS

*From the Yardbirds,
through Renaissance
and up to the
present . . .*

*Chris Simmonds
accompanied Jim
down Memory Lane
and escorted him
back to the Seventies*

pause for a big sigh of nostalgia.

So what do you say we have a little fun and take a stroll down Memory Lane in Jim's very capable hands? You can all join in — history lessons can be fun, and if you *don't* know where it all came from, stay with it.

Let's start at the beginning and see what we come up with.

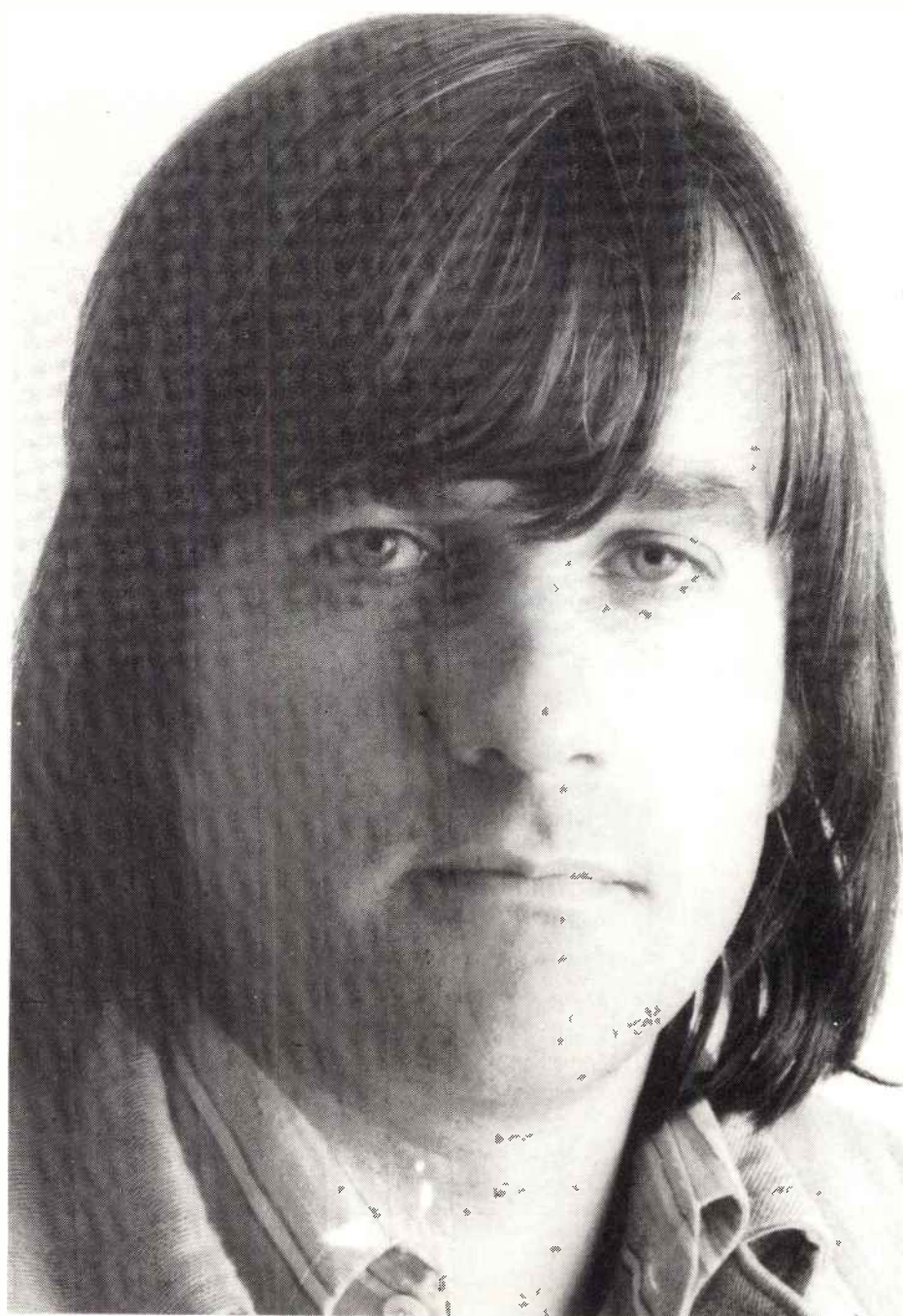
"We had a school group at Hampton Grammar, Paul Samwell-Smith was there as well. He played lead guitar in those days. We turned to R&B very quickly when it first came out, and we heard people like Jimmy Reed and Howlin' Wolf.

We got involved in it more or less at the same time as The Rolling

Stones, although they did get off the mark quicker. We heard about them and went along to have a look . . . it was different to what we were used to. They had another drummer at that time. Then they got the gig at the Station Hotel Richmond, and we used to go along there quite regularly to watch them."

So the first line-up of the Yardbirds was formed: Tony Topham on guitar, Chris Dreja on rhythm, Keith Relf on vocals, Paul Samwell-Smith on bass and Jim on drums.

"Paul and Keith were going to the same pub when we first formed the Yardbirds. We consciously decided to steer clear of anything the Stones did,



although we were all listening to the same albums and things. They did some Chuck Berry numbers so we left them out. They didn't do Smokestack Lightnin'. We had trouble with Topham because he was so young, 16 or 17 at the time. His parents didn't really go for him doing all these late sessions — we had an all nighter at Studio 51 — so we had to get a guy called Eric Clapton in, an old friend of Keith's. He played very nice guitar . . . We had a good few hours of material sorted out by then, most of it twelve bar, and we also had Georgio Gomelski as our manager."

Jim himself had progressed to a Premier kit by this time ("just very basic") before he decided to settle on Ludwig. He was also bending an ear towards the work of such drummers as Joe Morello, Buddy Rich, but, as he pointed out: "R&B drumming was very simple and basic, it was never a case of studying and building up a technique."

The Stones in the meantime had secured their famous residency at Richmond's Crawdaddy club, and when they had moved on to hit the big time, the Yardbirds took over there, putting down the roots of a family tree which was to blossom and take in most of Britain's biggest bands in the boom just around the corner. This was the bridge between the Shadows and big scale late Sixties rock. So the Yardbirds kept on pumping out their raw R&B until it was time for Clapton to move on and start his own family tree.

Bluesbreakers

"Georgio was doing quite well for the band, and he managed to get us onto the Beatles Christmas show at the Hammersmith Odeon. A publisher came down to see us and asked Georgio if we could do For Your Love, which had been written by Graham Gouldman. I suppose the arrangement of it with the harpsichord and the bongos was a bit far away from what Eric wanted to do, so he left the band over the song." For Your Love was commercial and went up to number one.

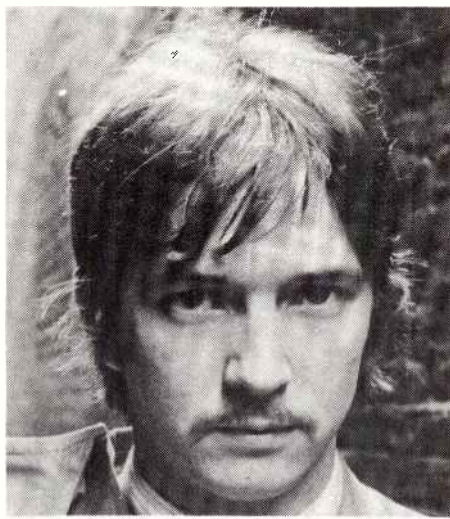
"Basically, we needed a hit because it was the only way we were going to get off that circuit. We'd been playing it for a couple of years already, and a lot of our contemporaries were having hits."

Clapton did the mandatory two weeks on a building site before he was contacted by John Mayall, after a guitarist for his Bluesbreakers. The Bluesbreakers album remains a classic. In the meantime, of course,

the Yardbirds needed a new guitarist. A gentleman called Jimmy Page recommended another gentleman called Jeff Beck, having declined the opportunity to take over himself in favour of his session work.

"Jeff was his stand in; if Jimmy couldn't do a session Jeff did it — played on a few numbers when people supposed it was Jimmy."

Beck was a different proposition to Clapton, a little on the moody side to begin with and musically getting well into his feedback, sustain, and other



assorted tricks. "It seemed to fit what we were doing. He could obviously play the bluesy style but he was keen on the electronics — Les Paul multitracking and so on. He was a bit difficult to get on with. We never really knew what it was; I suppose it was insecurity really." (Beck's version: "I wasn't ready for the glamour"). "We never knew what he was going to do because he never ever found an amp he was happy with. The amps always seemed to play up for some reason so he would kick them around, kick them off the stage and generally lose his temper. He was influenced a bit by Pete Townsend. It got to be a bit silly really."

Beck was to leave the group eventually, propelled by his own excesses, but the first man to leave that line-up was Paul Samwell-Smith, already interested in the production side. Jimmy Page took over on bass guitar while Chris Dreja learnt the instrument.

"It's a bit silly, really, when you think of Jeff Beck playing lead and Jimmy Page playing bass in the same band. Chris Dreja playing rhythm wasn't in the same class, and it seemed more sensible for them to switch."

When Dreja had learnt the bass, Page took over on rhythm and lead. "It was a bit much for the band.

Keith Relf was singing and playing harmonica, Jeff was playing most of the solos, and Jimmy was also playing solos. They did play some riffs at the same time — stereo — that was quite good. They seemed to build up a bit of competition. They'd play something like Train Kept A Rollin' with Jeff taking the first solo and Jimmy the second, and they were trying to out-blow each other. They'd both end up playing their balls off. But they had different styles. Jeff was very raw, ballsy, imprecise, but

"... so we had to get a guy called Eric Clapton in, an old friend of Keith's. He played very nice guitar . . ."

spot on on a good night. Good nights were few and far between. Jimmy was more or less on the same level all the time; precise, a well organised player. By this time it was more riff stuff and we didn't require a chunking rhythm guitar. It was all very loud; it was quite difficult for me to hear what I was playing. I thought the best time for the band was when Paul and Jeff were in it, around '66 when we had Shapes Of Things." Although the band had become well known, their singles success was dwindling and Jimmy Page suggested teaming up with Mickie Most to rectify the situation.

"It didn't really work out at all" — and that was the end of that little phase. The management side was also getting a little out of order. A figure named Peter Grant appeared on the scene. "Jeff had left by then, and the group was down to a foursome with Jimmy on guitar. The group was quite tight then." Although there was no sense of it within the group at the time, the Yardbirds through all their line-ups had become a seminal force in the R&B boom and an important influence on the bands that were to follow.

Apart from their own records, their ethnic credibility was increased by

□□□

JIM McCARTY

their occasional teaming with visiting blues artists from the States. One such figure was the notorious but brilliant Sonny Boy Williamson. Williamson was a prodigious liar in the nicest way, growing to believe his own yarns as he retold them with extra touches to anyone who would listen. He was usually drunk and he was probably the best harmonica exponent in the idiom. Jim recalled:

“Georgio was involved with the National Jazz Federation, and they used to bring over all these blues artists every year. Sonny Boy came over and Georgio sorted out a tour with us backing him. He told us his current selection of stories. He reckoned that he shared a log cabin with Bo Diddley and Howlin’ Wolf. He used to drink a bottle of scotch every day so he was usually well glassed. Nothing was ever rehearsed when he played with us. It was all basically twelve bar, you would just have to pick up the rhythm he started and guess where the ending was. Now and then he would be playing, sinking and sinking lower down — and then he would just keel over on to the floor. It was all part of the show. Georgio was quite keen on fixing up jam sessions; he brought other people round like Otis Span. Muddy Waters came down to see the band but he never played with us. In Chicago we sat in with Buddy Guy and Willie Dixon. That was quite good.”

The US was toured incessantly, and then the band decided that they could go no further with R&B. Jimmy Page went off to form a little band called Led Zeppelin, Chris Dreja dropped out altogether, and Relf and McCarty formed Renaissance.

“We were getting tired of all the heavy stuff — and the Yardbirds were pretty heavy towards the end — so Renaissance was an outlet for all our softer ideas.” By this stage Jim had gotten well into the writing side, necessitating a shift in emphasis from drums to piano and acoustic guitar.

“I contributed to quite a lot of the Yardbirds stuff without actually playing an instrument. The first thing I bought was one of these Japanese nylon guitars; Keith and I both had one. Unfortunately the band was really mismanaged. We went to the States and toured around Europe, we did quite well in Germany. But there was a lot of pressure on us; we came back to the old thing of having a single.” So Relf

“We were getting tired of all the heavy stuff . . . so Renaissance was an outlet for all our softer ideas”



Illusion L-r: John Hawken, Jane Relf, Jim McCarty, Louis Cennamo, John Knightsbridge and Eddie McNeil.

and McCarty dropped out for the time being.

In fact, Renaissance Mark One is the first vague link with Illusion, both in musical form and in the membership: John Hawken, keyboards, Jane Relf, vocals, Louis Cennamo, bass and Jim being common to both bands.

Paths diverged after the splintering of the first Renaissance. Relf and Cennamo tried to go heavy again, forming the ill-fated Armageddon and trying to get it off the ground in the States. There was one album but the band was mismanaged and this period coincided with Relf’s personal problems placing a great strain on him. Jim formed a band called Shoot, and they also made one album. John Hawken took his keyboards to the most illustrious succession of bands; Spooky Tooth, Vinegar Joe and the Strawbs.

The paths met again when Keith Relf decided “for a laugh” to attempt to reform the original Renaissance. All the old members were available, and they were in the process of rehearsing when Relf was electrocuted. In Keith’s place John Knightsbridge, lead guitar, and Eddie McNeil, drums, were recruited and

Illusion was born. There — history can be fun, can’t it?

You can probably see what I was talking about when I said that Illusion didn’t have an obvious niche in the current climate. The band has a strong classical bent, specialise in a lot of harmonies, and generally sound as if they would be more at home in a musical Tardis turned back a decade. Indeed, had Relf remained in

the band, one can only speculate how avant-garde they would have been. Jim’s interest in writing meant that he had totally abandoned drums in favour of acoustic guitar, using a Martin on the new album, and nowadays an Ovation run directly through the PA to help him achieve the traditional crisp chordal sound of amplified acoustic.

“It certainly doesn’t go along with the modern trend in this country, although there’s more of this sort of thing in America. It’s a bit difficult here either finding the right tour or gigs. If we are going to support somebody it has to be the right sort of act. We’ll try Germany in March; for some reason that market is more promising. Fleetwood Mac, Al Stewart, maybe even Genesis would be the sort of band I could envisage supporting.”

He’s right — I can’t help thinking they’ll have trouble in Britain. Maybe they’ll do well enough in Germany to move over to the States, and if they get by *there*, maybe we’ll get them back again. They’re quite a good band if you still like that sort of thing.

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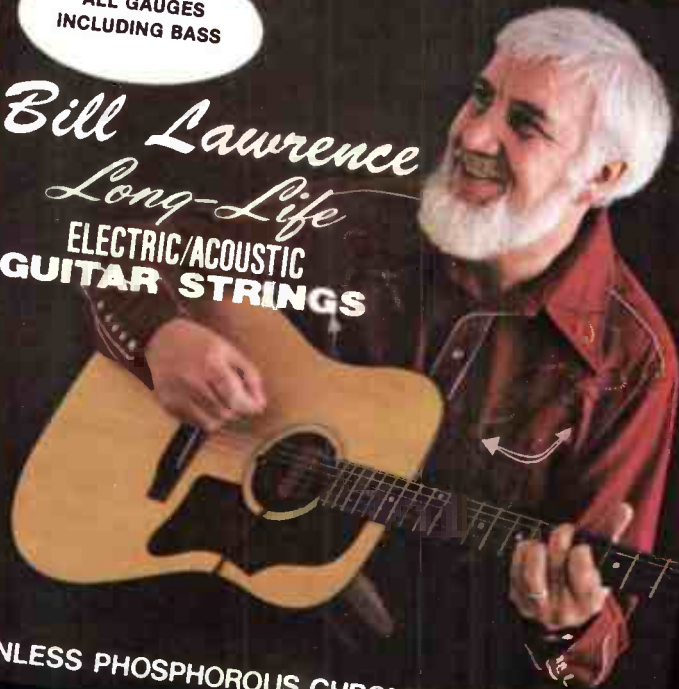
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RORY GALLAGHER

A career and
equipment profile
by Adam Sweeting



I lost count of the number of times men in check shirts spilt beer down me. Elderly blues and rock and roll music thundered over the PA. It got hotter. No, not a lumberjacks' benefit gig, but Rory Gallagher at the Marquee. There was genuine excitement in the air.

Gallagher must get sick of being called "a trooper" and "a gent", but both comments are fair. The bloke always seems to be touring, and he won't short-change his vociferous following under any circumstances. Take his Birmingham Town Hall gig some three years ago, when his band got stuck in motorway fog at Watford Gap. Rory takes up the story:

"I was panicking at the Hall, or the promoter was, I should say, and we had a choice of sending everyone away or doing something. So I said I'd go on and do a 45 minute acoustic set at least, with an announcement that if the fans came back a couple of weeks later the whole band would be here."

As luck would have it, a piano-playing mate of Gallagher's bassist Gerry McAvooy was in the Hall that night, and needed no encouragement to tickle the ivories while Rory played some electric guitar. The further arrival of Rory's brother — "he can just about keep a beat on the drums" — led to the three playing "a bit of a set". The incident is typical of Rory Gallagher, and it goes some of the way to explaining the loyalty of his fans. "It's one of those 'The show must go on' things that crop up once in a while", Rory said. "You have to do that, it's experience."

But on top of that, there's Gallagher's ability to ignite an audience. The Marquee gig was a case in point. He'd just completed three nights at the Hammersmith Odeon, but showed no sign of metal fatigue, Right from the shriek which launched the opening "Shin Kicker", Gallagher summoned enough energy to keep him bouncing and strutting across the stage for two hours. Predictably enough, he was dragged back for numerous encores. He seems to regard his prolonged hyper-activity as perfectly normal.

Independent

"I'm one of those guys who feels that music gets better for being played live and in front of good audiences, bad audiences, in different cities — not under stress by any means, but it's not as if we did one gig every year in a very plush hall, this kind of recital attitude. That's why I like Muddy Waters and people like that. They just go out and they play under odds, inasmuch as they don't know what the club's gonna be like or the hall's gonna be like, they just keep on doing it. But that's not unusual in rock and roll, I mean I'm against this system that you should be a huge pop star by the age of 25 and then click, that's it, your retire. It used to be the system that you'd end up at the Talk of the Town or on the Des O'Connor Show or something. I think, particularly anything connected with the blues or rhythm and blues . . . gritty music improves with age, it improves by playing it, whittling it down, understanding the music."

So can we expect to see a wizened old Rory Gallagher playing the blues well into the 21st century? I wouldn't be surprised. On his latest and very listenable Chrysalis album, "Photo-Finish", he's written a song called "Last Of The Independents", and apparently I wasn't the first person to ask if that's the way he thinks of himself.

"Last Of The Independents" isn't about music. It's a tongue-in-cheek story about a gangster getting away from the Mafia, cos he was involved in a stick-up 11 years ago and only he knows where the money was stashed. It's a bit like that movie 'Charlie Varrick', with Walter Matthau.

Did you see that? Certain people have read some of the lines in the song as autobiographical or something, like 'I play by my own rules' and the title. Some people see me as the last of some kind of a breed or something. But I'd hate to have everybody regard me as the last of any breed or the first of any. I'm aware that I've gone through the late 60s and through the 70s, doing whatever I do. The point is, if I was to get worried about every fad that comes along, whether it was Bryan Ferry or Gary Glitter or psychedelic or punk or whatever . . . y' know, they all have their thing to offer, but I just enjoy getting up there and letting the music cook."

"I just enjoy getting up there and letting the music cook"

Gallagher's legendary good-nature shows signs of strain when he's accused of being caught in a hair-and-denims time warp. "I'm not that sensitive about it, but certain writers are inclined to write you away as 'This guy wears a denim jacket, how dare he wear a denim jacket?' I was never into sartorial elegance anyway. Why throw away your love for blues or rhythm and blues just because it's not in vogue. But then again, all of a sudden now it's somewhat back in fashion. In the meantime, there's a good audience out there that follows what I do and I just try to enjoy it. But it can be a bit disheartening.

"I just think too many artists are so fashion conscious, so pushed about by what they think the press expects of them. They think 'progress' is something to do with changing your clothes in Carnaby Street or buying the latest synthesizer. That's not progress. Music is playing, getting out there and working at it as often as you can, and enjoying it. You can't but progress then, it's an internal progression, and that's all I try to do."

But the proof of the pudding . . . "The point is, if we were doing the wrong thing, the audience would soon ebb away, and the younger set in the audience would say, 'Oh this guy, he's not worth going to see.' But we're getting bigger audiences and we've been getting bigger audiences in the last 10 years than a lot of the more heralded names.

"But", he added, "I must stop sounding like a politician." On "Photo-Finish", Rory has succumbed to a little more studio wizardry than in the past, but despite this the material translates very well to live use. He still likes to retain an essentially live approach to recording.

"Over the years I've gone through different attitudes about recording. On a couple of albums I sang live, played live lead guitar and then overdubbed a bit of rhythm. I suppose in retrospect it was a bad idea, but at the time I wanted to get something as truthful as possible, mistakes and all. But with the last three albums I've been a bit more intelligent about it. I'm not averse to overdubbing vocals and lead parts if need be, or a rhythm part. But most of the basic things are still live-ish, drums, bass, lead guitar come rhythm guitar, and, there's usually an attempt at a live vocal. Then after that, if it needs it, we'll maybe stick on a rhythm guitar or a little bit of percussion or repair a lead line.

"But some of the things on 'Photo-Finish' are a little more produced than others. Let me see, on 'Overnight Bag' you've got two acoustic guitars doing a bridge part and two electric guitars playing rhythm. Then there's an old 12

RORY GALLAGHER

string Vox Phantom going through a flanger giving little kinda organish clips. I think that's nice on some tracks, you can build up a little guitar orchestra, if you like, but I want to keep it as subtle as possible. I don't want to go as far as Brian May, who's a very talented player, but that to me is not my bag, as they say. I prefer it if one guitar does the track, as in 'Mississippi Sheiks', though there again I snuck a rhythm guitar in. It only gets a little bit against my code when you end up with three lead guitars wailing away in the background, something I could obviously never do on stage. I'm somewhere in between. I like to more or less let the music cook and try and patch it up and make it sound like we're having a good time in the studio and gettin' it on."

It was convenient that Rory had mentioned "Overnight Bag", because it led naturally into my clever pre-planned question about his writing style. "Bag" stands out on the new album as a song conspicuously more structured than much of the Cork fellow's output. Would he agree that a lot of his tunes are custom built for the purposes of guitar wizardry? Perhaps this wasn't tactful.

"No, never. It's a constant problem, people sort of think that I write songs as guitar vehicles, which I don't. Some songs I think could be done by other people with other, y'know..." (I think Rory meant that some of his songs could successfully be given a different treatment to his own by other artists. Sounds feasible).

"They're not guitar vehicles, but on the other hand I'm proud of being a guitar player and I enjoy having a good bash at the guitar, playing lead guitar, which is a dirty word these days. It's a part of the appeal — people buy the records to hear the band, to hear the guitar and the voice and the songs. But I certainly never short change myself lyrically, I sweat over the songs to make them as good as possible. If I wanted guitar vehicles I could just do 10 versions of "Rock Me Baby" or something."

But to revert to the ubiquitous "Bag", it stands out for its lack of guitar soloing, its subtler-than-the-Gallagher-norm textures and mellow changes. No?

"Compared to something like 'Cloak And Dagger' it's very much a song and it's built up piece by piece and yes, it's a very textured, coloured tune. That's the strength of the album, I think. A song like 'Overnight Bag' stands out very well in contrast to something like 'Cruise On Out', which is a straight, fast rockabilly thing with just a Telecaster and an acoustic guitar. Whatever it takes. Whenever a song needs a certain treatment, you just try and do it."

The discussion of Rory's writing led fairly naturally into the more general topic of the Irish rock and roll background. Ireland seems to be going through a renaissance, what with Lizzy, the Boomtown Rats and now the Undertones and a host of others. What would life be without the venerable Peel playing "Teenage Kicks"? First of them all, of course, was Van Morrison.

"He was the first one to make it and he broke a lot of the walls down", Rory reckons. "But to be fair I never found any animosity over here. You know, being Irish you'd get the odd quip, people didn't think that you might be able to cut it. The difficulty for the Irish musician was that he had to leave home, come to London and starve — you could predict the starvation — and then y'know, try knocking at the doors of the record companies. Whereas if you were over here, a Londoner or someone from England who knew the set-up and could always take the bus home to your parents for a hot meal, it wasn't too bad."

When Rory was a lad, there were precious few outlets for budding rockers in Ireland. There were a few beat clubs, and the showband circuit, which is where the 15-year-old Gallagher found himself out of necessity.

"It was fun but it wasn't a serious thing. But at 15 just to plug into an AC30 and play for a few nights a week was a dream, you know. It gave me a chance to play in the Irish ballrooms in England, and then on my nights off go to the Marquee and see Steve Winwood, the Yardbirds and all kinds of people. And it gave me a trip to Spain and caused havoc with my schooling."

Rory is delighted with the amount of music blasting out of his homeland now, though, and cites a couple of bands who supported him on his recent Irish tour.

"We had a band called Rule The Roost from Donegal doing semi country-rock stuff, very good. And a group called the Bogey Brothers, a three-piece from Dublin. Both groups were really well up to scratch, and there's a load of other bands coming up. There's a real birth of groups now, cos the old showband scene has really cooled down an awful lot. With the success of the Irish bands, record companies are taking Irish rock and roll seriously now, it's not just sort of, 'Huh, who are these leprechauns?', the kind of attitude they used to have."

What is it that these Irish chaps have got, then? Boomtown Rat Gerry Cott once suggested that it was the old Celtic story-telling tradition manifesting itself in powerchord format. Take "Rat Trap", for example — very long for a number one single, but it tells a story which, presumably, people got into. Unless it was just the sax riff. Rory G. tends to agree.



“Lyrically I think there’s a little twist that some of the Irish writers have, like Linnott has, and Van Morrison of course. Some people think that there’s a slightly different sound to the Irish groups. A lot of Irish writers tend to write little stories, it’s a good point actually. Semi-Celtic legendary or mystical things. Van used to write semi-autobiographically in things like ‘Madame George’ or ‘Cypress Avenue’.

“Bob Geldof is a different writer, his writing is more journalistic, more modern. It’s not as unconscious as the way Van would write, Van doesn’t sound like he sat down and worked at it. Bob’s writing is a very structured, methodical kind of writing, but then again, why should he be like Van Morrison by any means? We all write in different ways. That’s where it should end — any more speculation other than the fact that Irish groups are good is just superfluous.”

Rory went on to shed a little light on his own creative processes.

“I’ve written stories, but more like from an American flashpoint. I’ve written things like ‘Last Of The Independents’ as a gangster running away. ‘In Your Town’ is (from the ‘Deuce’ album on Polydor) is about a jailbreak, about a load of gangsters going over the wall. I write other kinds of songs too, I try to keep my writing allied to the actual force of the music as much as possible. ‘Mississippi Sheiks’, that’s about a country blues group that actually existed on the streets of the South called the Mississippi Sheiks. They’re dead now. They were just a fiddle and guitar duo, they used to make some really nice music. In the song I kind of go into a time machine and go

back in time. It’s a slow rock song, and I just try and conjure up the atmosphere of the time, y’know. Songs can come in all kinds of ways.”

Rory Gallagher is much better known for his guitar playing than his song-writing, though “Photo-Finish” contains some of the strongest material he’s written. His roots are strictly in blues and old rock and roll. In his early years as a musician, all his exposure to the music he loves was via the records of Chuck Berry, Jimmy Reed, Eddie Cochran and Elmore James — among others.

“You find yourself saying if Eddie Cochran and Elvis Presley make great rock and roll, then you hear Elmore James and Muddy Waters who are even rougher ... it’s just the muscular appeal of the music. And the lyrics, the humour in blues lyrics and the whole tough, unusual way of using words, like in Bo Diddley’s writing for instance, using all these car names and street names. I just love it. There must be something in the sound of it, the wail or the loneliness of the sound or whatever you want to call it. It always sounded better to me than straight pop music.

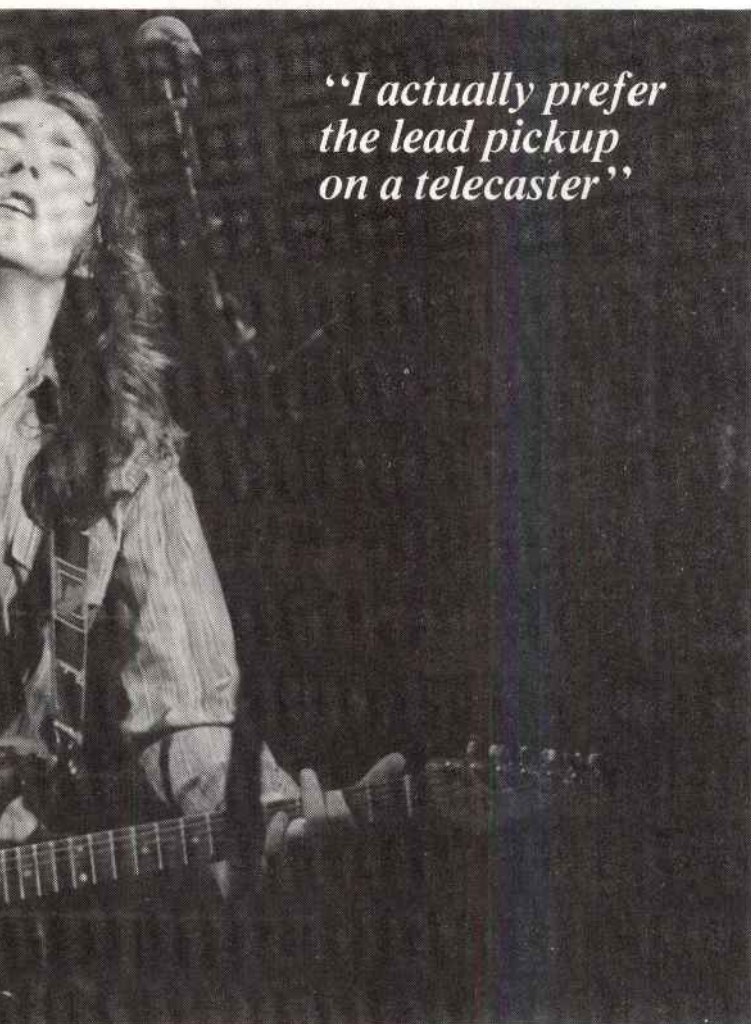
“It’s hard not to get knocked off your feet by Elmore James or Howlin’ Wolf. For me, Wolf singing ‘Wang Dang Doodle’ or ‘Shake For Me’ has got as much viciousness as ‘Anarchy In The UK’ or any of those things. I mean, they’re just harder, modern Eddie Cochran songs if you ask me, which is alright, y’know, it’s just real hard brute force playing. But Howlin’ Wolf had the benefit of having a ridiculous voice, he was the most dominating singer you could ever hear. Plus the recording sound of the Chess studios, it was just outrageous — amazin’ sound.”

Cardboard

Rory’s first ever gig was with a skiffle group, which included his brother and another friend. Luckily, he started singing before he learned guitar, so he never found any difficulty with playing and singing simultaneously. That makes him one up on B. B. King. Not surprisingly, Rory’s ambition was always to play lead guitar, though he’s keen to point out that he tries to be what he calls a complete guitar player who can play rhythm and fills as well as lead. The old showband training came in handy in that area, since Rory was the only guitar player for most of the time and had to double as lead and rhythm guitarist. As for contemporary guitar players, Rory listens to just about everybody.

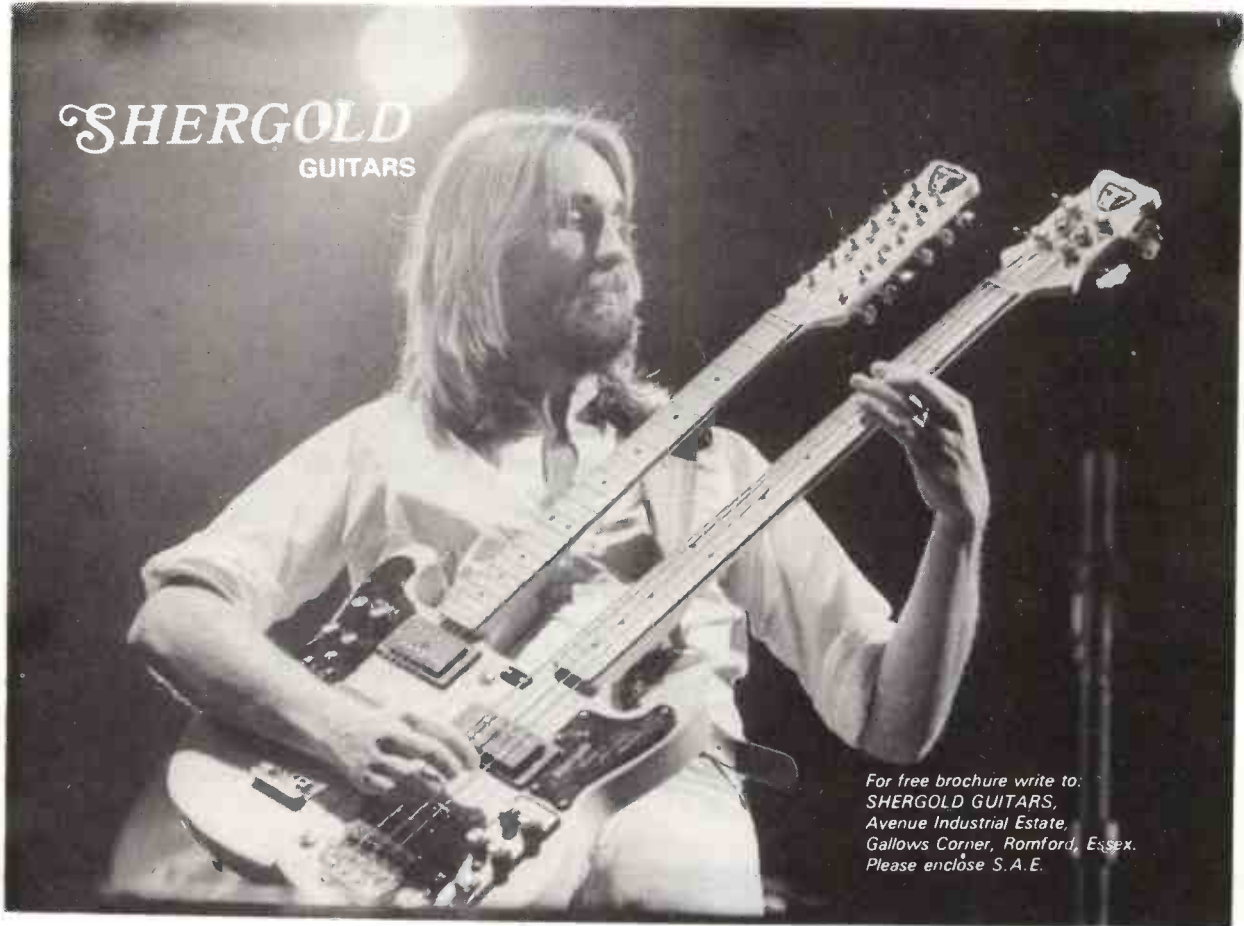
“I’m a guitar fan, that’s the problem. Without going into all the bluesmen, I like Keith Richard, Johnny Winter, John Hammond, Lowell George. I like Ry Cooder, I love his experiments with different things. But I’d love once for him to do an album with ‘Smack Dab In The Middle’ and those R&B ish things. He’s inclined to dot his albums with one or two of these tracks and then you have a semi-Hawaiian track or a semi-jazz track or semi-something else. It gets a bit too eclectic, or whatever the word is.

“I’ve always liked people like Martin Carthy and Bert Jansch, too. I always regard myself as a fan of the general scene. That doesn’t mean I like everybody’s records, but there’s a lot of great players around. I’m always ready to enjoy it, even if it’s a punk record. If the guitar’s suitably on the ball, then fine. My main criticism of most punk records is that they’re badly produced. If they used the old blues or rock and roll techniques rather than this 24 track sound, they wouldn’t be gettin’ all these cardboard drums. If they want the big sound, they should go for the Who sound. That’s the model for a punk group, if you like, that sound. Pete Townshend’s laying I like, and Mick Green’s. I’m afraid I’ve got a good word for so many players.”



*“I actually prefer
the lead pickup
on a telecaster”*

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RORY GALLAGHER

... Except the new wave, which he evidently regards as a fashion to be viewed with caution. Strange really. But I digress. Currently, Rory is more than happy with his three-piece line-up which is completed by the stalwart Gerry McAvoy on bass and ex-SAHB person Ted McKenna on drums. Having dispensed with keyboards in the summer of '78, Rory finds the burden of filling all the available musical spaces resting lightly on the fretboard of his decrepit Strat.

"I don't feel that it's any more tiring now than when we had the keyboards. The keyboards do their thing and the guitar does its thing. With the keyboards, I never really stopped and played rhythm or took a breather, so I don't feel any more tired now after a gig than I did before. I suppose it might be different with another guitar, I haven't worked with another guitarist for a long period of time so it's probably worth a bash. This is definitely the happiest band I've had, though, and I think at present we've got enough going for us as a three-piece."

Ampeg

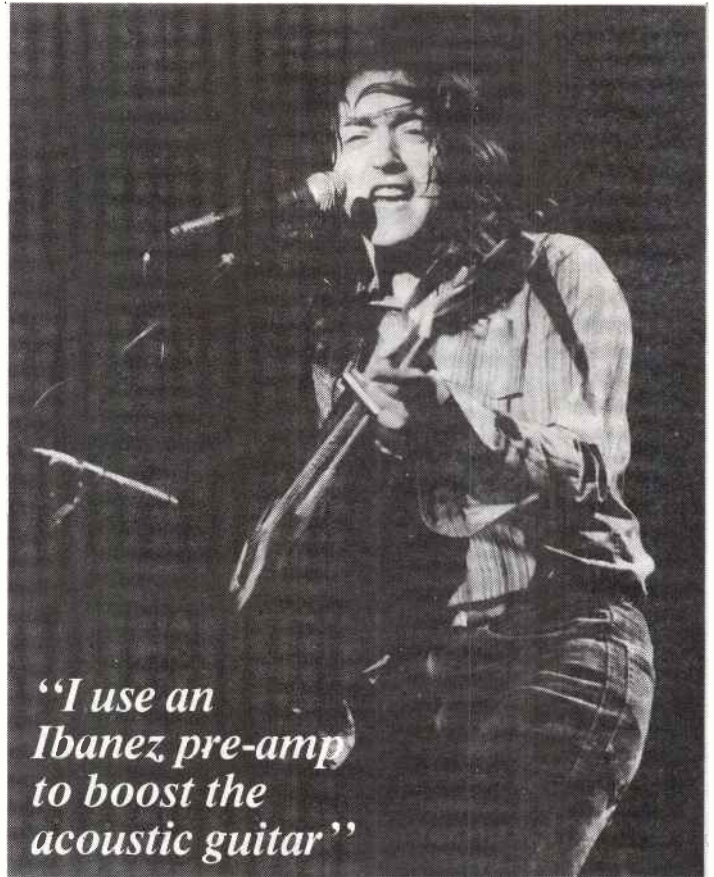
Gallagher's essentially earthy approach to his craft is reflected in his equipment. Not for him the exotic customised technology visible onstage with many of the Supertax bands. His battered Strat has become a trademark over the years. Is this because it does everything he wants a guitar to do?

"Almost! Never quite. The Strat for me is just structurally the best guitar you can get. Machine heads all on one side, and the scale being slightly longer than Gibsons, it suits me. You can get more pull on the strings above the 12ft fret. Apart from that, my tone control handles all the tones for all three pickups, that's the only custom thing. I was slow to get that modification done, but I'm glad I did. I actually prefer the lead pickup on a Telecaster, and I've often thought of putting that in the lead position on the Strat. On a Fender Esquire I had a Tele lead pickup, and then two Strat pickups and a five-way switch."

For amplification, Rory has currently abandoned the old Fender gear he used to use in favour of Ampeg. The Fenders were a Concert from 1960, and a really old Bassman from 1954. "With all the wear and tear, it was hard work for them", he observes. He now has an Ampeg VT 40 which he links up with a VT 22. He finds that the Ampegs give him the mid-range response he's looking for, which isn't the case with, say, the Ritzy but wallet-piercing Music Man units. On top of that, Rory has a treble and bass booster made by a New Jersey company called Hawk. And in addition to the Strat ...

Truss-rod

"At present I'm using a Gretsch Corvette for slide instead of the Esquire. The Corvette is Gretsch's attempt at a Les Paul Junior, but I took off the Gretsch pickup because it was too weak and I put on a P90, which is an old black Gibson single coil pickup. For the acoustic number, I have a mandolin, a Martin from the 1930s and a National steel-bodied guitar, also from the 30s. I had a new fretboard put on the National in the States because it was beginning to warp — there's no truss-rod in those guitars. The Martin's a D35 with a little Ibanez transducer. I find the Ibanez a little more toppy than, say, a Barcus-Berry



"I use an Ibanez pre-amp to boost the acoustic guitar"

Hot Dot. Then I use an Ibanez pre-amp to boost the acoustic guitar. Luckily on the pre-amp I have a little three-way graphic, with which you can cut down the bottom end. On the Dreadnought Martins you get a bit too much of a bass-boom sound, which may be grand for a guy playing in a folk club but it gets a bit annoying for anyone playing the big shows."

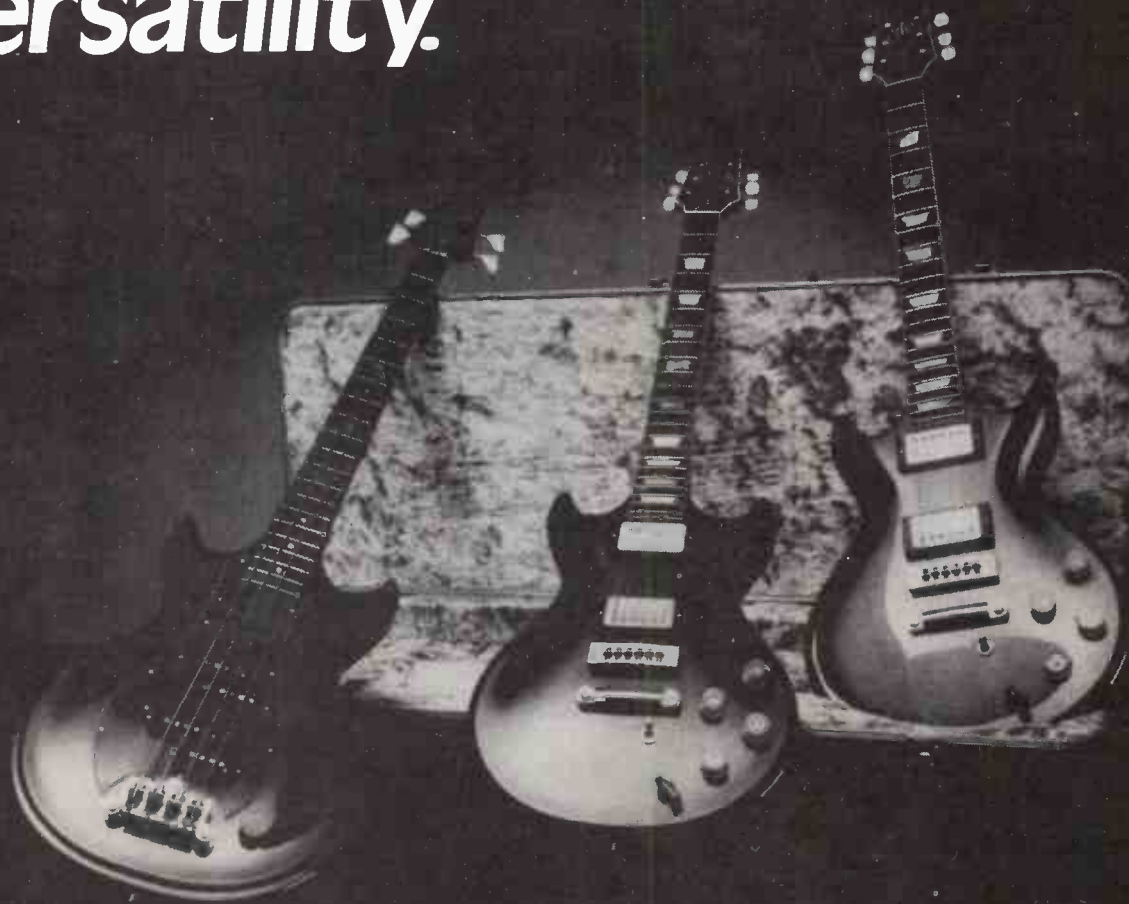
One of Gallagher's more unusual stylistic devices is his use of normal tuning to play slide guitar, though he only does this on a couple of tunes. Again, on *Cruise On Out* for example, he'll drop his top E to D and play in the key of D. But he uses various open tunings too, mainly A or E., which suit his vocal range. For acoustic numbers, he favours a D tuning, "because I tend to be singing country blues type things, so it works." He also uses a tuning favoured by Bert Jansch, among others, which is (from the top string down) D A G D A D. In other words, a D tuning with the G string remaining at G rather than dropping down to F sharp.

"It's a sort of Celtic sound, so you get your major chord from your second fret, third string. You get a chord and a half, a modal sort of sound. I think I know most of the main tunings, but a lot of them aren't practical. B is a lovely tuning for acoustic guitar, it's the same as C but it's down a step. The only trouble is you'd have to be doing Joni Mitchell or Tom Rush stuff."

Rory says he only gets about two nights' worth out of a set of strings, because of his aggressive playing style and various re-tunings. "I don't wanna be too sedate about it, I mean you gotta dig in there", he says.

Rory Gallagher is one of the most durable artists in rock & roll, and looks like being so for a long time to come. He's not fashionable, but nor are his fans. He won't let you down.

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ALEMBIC BASS GUITAR

*Price: £1605 inc. VAT
Reviewed by: See text
Compiled by: Tom Stock.*

A number of Beat readers have recently expressed a feeling that we ought to review cheaper instruments: those of you may well feel that the subject of this particular review is tantamount to telling you to stick your criticisms in your ears. On the other hand, we get many letters from dreamers — those who aspire one day to some of the finer musical instruments in life, and it is for these that we have decided to review this Alembic bass: the single most expensive guitar Beat has ever reviewed.

For a number of reasons we decided in this instance not to publish simply the views of one single reviewer, but rather to give four different people the opportunity to try the beast out. Thus the panel became: John Entwistle, Paul Gedney, Gary Cooper and myself.

The choice was deliberate. John is sufficiently well known as a bass player and he happens to already own eight Alembics of varying kinds; Paul Gedney has had a fair amount of professional bass playing experience with, among others, Brand X, Delaney and Bonnie, and Ronnie Lane; Gary and I provided the journalist's view tempered with the experience of playing a different guitar each day — Gary especially in the bass field!

Well, what's so special about Alembics? First off, there's the price, although they do sell for rather less in their native California. I phoned the importers, James Grant Music of Edinburgh, who were kind enough to give me a rough idea of the cost of importing such an instrument. You must remove the VAT which in this instance amounts to just over £200 on its own. Then, there's import duty which can take care of another £100 plus, and then you've got to pay over £100 simply for transit, and what about storage and insurance as well? All in all, after these necessary for importation payments have been ignored you'll approach a slightly more realistic figure of somewhere around the £1150-£1200 mark. Now consider the plight of the importer who has had to pay, probably up front for a single instrument, and carry that payment for the time it takes to get here. In other words, Alembic are to blame for the

price — not the importer! Interestingly enough, I phoned Alembic in California and they told me that no one should pay more than £1100 for this guitar. Well, Mr. Alembic, it's up to you to drop your price!

But, unfortunately, the price is £1605 and that's a hell of a lot of anyone's hard earned moolah — you could conceivably get a four piece band on the road for that including the purchase of a ratty old Commer Van. Alternatively, you bass players could cop a Kramer, an Acoustic bass combo, and spend a month in the Canary Islands musing over the wisdom of your purchase. You might not get quite such a good guitar, but at least you'll be able to hear it, and whoever got a suntan from looking at his axe?

So what about this particular Alembic bass? Well, it's a beautifully finished, long scale bass containing a few interesting innovations in active electronics: it doesn't however, fly, walk, swim or recite poetry as perhaps you might expect at that price! This particular review model is serial number 78-1199. Its manufacture, involving thirteen different members of the Alembic staff, was completed on the 27th July, 1978. The Scale length is 34" — full two octaves — and the neck is mable and purple heart. The top and back are Padouk (?) and the centre core mahogany. Machines are Schaller and all inlays are genuine mother-of-pearl. Most of the hardware is solid brass. Strings supplied were Dan Markley, and the action had been pre-set to medium with all the harmonics adjusted accordingly.

The switch gear does differ from virtually every other instrument we've reviewed



John Entwistle puts the Alembic through its paces.

with the possible exception of the Gibson RD Artist. The p/u selector sits well up near the neck on the bottom side of the guitar. The switch is four position: standby, treble only, both, and bass p/u only. The two p/uses have their own normal operating controls: two large rotary knobs one each for volume and tone although Alembic refer to the latter as a 'frequency control'. Immediately above both pairs of rotaries is a small, three position toggle; named the bass 'Q' switch and the treble 'Q' switch, they control the amount of gain from each p/u — low, medium and high.

Farther down still, we come to a 5-pin socket which connects to a power supply to operate the instrument from an AC Line; the jack-plug, sited alongside, is duo-functional. It switches the batteries on, and carries the output signal. The jack is stereo — use of a mono lead results in sound from one p/u only.

Turning the instrument over, we get a gander at two brass plates. One houses the batteries — in this case, 2 x 9 volt transistor radio type. The other, larger plate, conceals the active electronics and has four very small recessed screws.

The top and bottom screws manipulate sensitivity of the bass and treble p/uses. This control reduces the instrument's output when turned counter-clockwise, and increases it when turned clockwise.

In practice, however, the Alembic can become hot enough to overdrive almost any amp and give the bass player the sort of distortion that only Hendrix and fish eye lenses have hitherto enjoyed! The two central screws on this plate are hum-balance controls for the bass and treble p/u. At this point (anybody getting bored?) it becomes necessary to turn the axe over and take a second look at the action side: in between the two p/uses is a smaller, almost flush with the body black p/u.

What it does is unique to those guitars of which we have knowledge. The Hum-balance controls are used to eliminate hum pick up from stray magnetic fields. The instructions tell us to see the controls on the front of the guitar to operate one pick up only; then orient the guitar so that hum pick up from surrounding equipment etc. is maximum, and then adjust the corresponding hum-balance control to completely cancel the hum. Then repeat the procedure for the other p/u. On stage this would undoubtedly have enormous advantages — especially in a big, loud and noisy band where the amount of interference from ancillary equipment can be enormous.

OK, that's the staple diet side of the Alembic. What did our reviewers think of it? As it turned out we split into two camps — Entwistle on his own, and Gendey, Cooper and Stock on the other side. But, we did not disagree in principle: rather John's comments came from extensive prior knowledge, specialist knowledge, of this kind of guitar, whereas Camp 2 had no previous experience of Alembics.

John commented that it's a pretty 'standard Alembic' — and not one of the better ones that he'd seen. His two areas of criticism came down to the fittings, and the neck. "My experience of Alembics has been that the neck moves around quite a

lot which can be very disturbing. I've got some Alembics with the optional graphite neck fitted which improves things tremendously. The graphite neck just won't move around, and it gives the whole guitar a much firmer feel." The fittings which found his displeasure are the brass ones: "Rotosound strings (which John uses) and I suppose other makes, tend to wear down the fittings after a while, cutting gouges in them and altering the playing action."

But on one thing all four of us were agreed. The Alembic can produce just about every kind of conceivable base guitar sound from the dirtiest, muddiest, filthiest wall to the piercing, sharp, funky brand. On sound alone the Alembic scored very highly indeed. But we were concerned that at this price it's not perfect. Even taking into account the fact that there's a fair amount of import duty and tax etc. the fact remains that someone will have to pay out £1605 for this instrument.

It was common agreement amongst us that things therefore should be perfect, and they were most definitely not. While it is undeniably a beautiful instrument, on which the wood finish ranks amongst the very best we've ever seen anywhere even on expensive furniture (!) some things jarred: the bridge, a solid piece of brass carved out is lumpy and unattractive; the machine heads are chrome, while all other fittings are brass: why is this? There were pencil marks on the side of the neck, under the varnish, where somebody thought the position markers might be sited; the battery brass plate should most definitely have been recessed to lie flat like the one which covers the electronics; the holding screws there should be recessed too, and on the electronic cover, they too should have been brass. The protruding point at the bass of the body may look very attractive, but it sure makes it difficult to stand the thing up against a wall — surely a very common practice amongst guitar players, not all of whom remember every time to lay it carefully in its case. Is it possible to consider criticisms at this level? Well, for Gary, Paul and I, we felt entitled to pick as many nits as we could in an instrument of such astronomic cost. Gary perhaps hit the nail on the head when he said that in all honesty it's really a guitar for the superstar only: while it may just have the edge on the variety of sounds available, there are, after all, a number of fine instruments from other manufacturers at a quarter of the cost which can also produce a wide range of sound — for example, the Aria reviewed in the next column!

While it would be totally unfair to compare such a guitar with the Alembic on cost alone, it would certainly stand comparison in sound: not as good, but getting there. At all times the Alembic remained perfectly in tune, and proved quite easy to play — Gary dissenting here — despite it's long neck and fair sized body. Heavy yes, but heavyweight it is not.

John again emphasised how much better the guitar would be after some personalisation had been performed, including the graphite neck, but that would push the price up by as much as one would be required to pay for say a Precision bass. Think about that!



ARIA PRO BASS GUITAR

Price: £394 inc. VAT
Reviewed by: Chris Simmonds

Aria continue their seemingly inexorable rise, if not to the top of the guitar tree quite yet, at least to the branches inhabited only by squirrels. Actually, squirrels don't have a lot to do with it. Nor does the little green leaflet all about the machine heads.

The first three pages in Japanese might be poetry, but the English translation on the back is unlikely to win the Pulitzer Prize. "As grease is not leak, part of the shaft and gear is greased sufficiently." A wise precaution. "It is new manufacture whose screw is not loose and whose knob is fixed with the shaft." Could be painful. "Attention — when using it for a long time, the revolution of knob more fast, be sure to adjust it before you string with adjustment tool." Well, you have to be careful, don't you?

I stopped giggling like a schoolgirl when I had carefully placed this leaflet in my treasure tray, and turned my attention to the matter in hand, the Aria Pro Bass Guitar. The immediate impression of excellence remained undiminished save for a few small details — precisely as expected in view of the reputation that preceded the bass from our previous meetings with its electric and acoustic six-string cousins.

Eyecatchers coming up. One, an appropriately styled elegant double cutaway curving up to points which amazingly are not obviously reminiscent of existing designs. The lower and much smaller cutaway tucks in right along the last of the Pro's 24 frets. The top cutaway meets the neck six frets lower down.

Two, that neck, maple laced with a pair of walnut stripes running down the back, with two more on the body. It is a 'transmit' neck, so called because it runs the length of the guitar; the neck doesn't meet the body, when it's gone far enough it *becomes* the body, merging to create an axe of such solidity that you wonder why anybody ever tolerated the notion of necks and bodies parting company after a few years' beating.

Once you've got the transmit neck (maple), body (ash) — and remember the walnut topping as well, and you've quickly

Continued over ...

adjusted to the idea that it's one hunk, the only extras are the bridge, fretboard, (jacaranda) nut, machine heads and controls.

The Supermatic bridge and top nut are both solid brass. Aria know that a nice brass bridge is a pleasure to look at, and that's probably why they didn't bother to waste anyone's time with a cover plate. Not only easy on the eye, but easy too when it comes to restringing. No holes or hidden bits.

Even in the departments where Aria might have been expected to play it safe and use other firm's tried and tested bits and pieces, they've gone it alone and come up trumps. Machines, all fittings, and most important the pickup, are Aria's own.

That's a quick glance at the aesthetics (I haven't got the brute out of its case yet, for Chrissake) which can be summed up as 'like the transmit neck and the brass'. Now just give me a second to race through the controls and then we'll be in business: one conventional tone and volume, six-position tone and a tiny toggle switch to switch selector in or out. Out of sight lurks a battery powered pre-amp (like the Ibanez) and a noise-killer circuit. What is this? Who wants to kill noise? Mabe they mean nuisance noise instead of flatten the back row noise. Right, let's forget the words and get on with the action.

Tempting

Four frets more than Fender, a full two octaves on each string, and perfectly in tune right the way along. I found the brass nut just a little too high — let's say that E, A, D, and G sharps which crop up in the middle of faster runs will require a little extra concentration to keep them sharp, but that's no real problem.

A bit more of a problem is the fact, no doubt to avoid punctuating the panorama of finely finished ash and walnut, that Aria have declined to put any markers on the volume and tone controls, although each knob has a white dot. No doubt you'd soon get the hang of this if you owned the guitar, but a lot of musicians actually like definite settings to know where they are. A minor smack on the wrists.

However, that tone selector is so tempting that you don't really care what's happening with volume and tone. Stuff up the volume and forget it — just stuff the tone altogether because the range of the selector covers *everything* you need plus a few more options that you probably won't.

In vague terms these run from a nondescript thin bass sound at one end and a nondescript thick bass sound at the other with the more interesting tones in the middle. With the help of the English Valley roundwound strings being subjected to a bit of exaggerated plucking, a rather crisp and urgent relative of the Rick-o-funk sound is available. Move over for a fatter helping of bass-midrange to get a more resolute growl with a bit of hum to it.

You can get 'warmth', 'depth', even 'beef' and the only musician likely to voice any dissatisfaction would be the Lemmy-type hell for leather merchants obsessed with perpetrating total full-blooded aural



massacre. Anyway, it would be like trying to drag-race in a Rolls Royce. Once you have your sound, sustain is there if you want it; that's the brass with its finger in the pie again.

The Pro Bass carries a price tag of £394 including VAT. On some models that kind of figure can be a bit of a con-trick to make the punter feel that he is handling something right in the top league. In this instance I would say that it's marginally over the top; that price hurdles even, say, a Precision. However, if the guitar is going to compare favourably, as it does, with its

peers, then the price has a right to enter that league as well.

It's only when you add the case, at £47.10 extra, and realise that you're well over the £400, that beads of sweat reluctantly start appearing on the wrinkled brow. Never mind. It's a bona fide beast, and it will last.

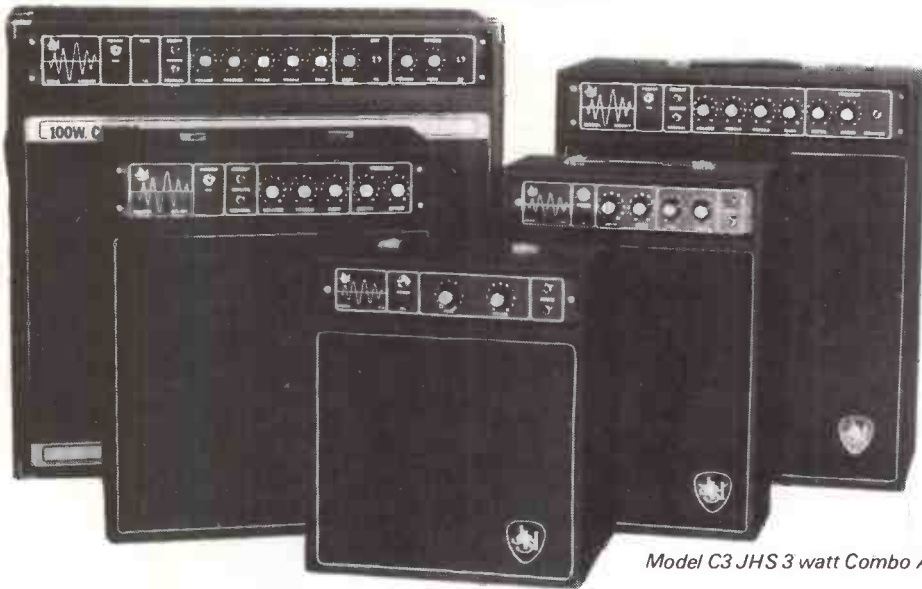
Hats off for the umpteenth time to those crafty, crafty Japanese and to Gigsville for backing a winner and spreading the word. Or, as the little green leaflet might put it, "bass guitarist whose screw not loose with knobs on up competition".

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INSTRUMENT REVIEW

Amplifiers



HH STUDIO FIFTY COMBO

Price: 169.07 inc. VAT

Reviewed by: Chris
Simmonds

For no apparent reason I've never been much taken with HH amplifiers. Maybe it was their specialising in a tinny reverb, which I don't like, or maybe it's the fact that they've been successfully rubbing shoulders with the top (should I say 'other top') brands for years while smaller fish, and in some cases better ones, fell by the wayside.

They added insult to injury by emerging healthier than ever after the valve/solid state controversy, simply by following the obvious course of providing solid state amplifiers with a so-called valve sound facility. To baldly announce that the only place you get a valve sound is from valves would be missing the point.

At any rate, better that I should get that off my chest and go on to give a fair review than quietly harbour these little prejudices and provide a consequently worthless opinion from that basis.

The beast in question is the Studio Fifty, an exemplary specimen of HH's undoubted ability to gauge a market and cater accordingly. In this market they are old hands; a compact, slickly designed 50 watt combo, comfortably guided by dint of its solid state circuitry towards the studio but also able (surprise, surprise) to turn up on stage and, miked up, tear the average sized club apart.

So, first the old vital statistics and then, much more salient, what happens when you start waving a jackplug around. Well, 50 watts RMS into 4 ohms for a start. Weight: 52lbs. Dimensions: 22" x 21 1/2" x 14". The 12" Invader speaker, mounted on a die-cast magnesium chassis, is HH's own, cone being standard ribbed paper. One little extra in that department is their use of a special adhesive around the cone instead of the old magnet and plates method. The cabinet, 18mm high density timber, blends plywood for the constructional axes with chipboard where there is less stress. Underneath, neither feet nor castors are to be found. Instead, top and bottom, the corners are protected by some nice butch high density



polyurethane. The distinctive HH grille is extruded high density polyurethane.

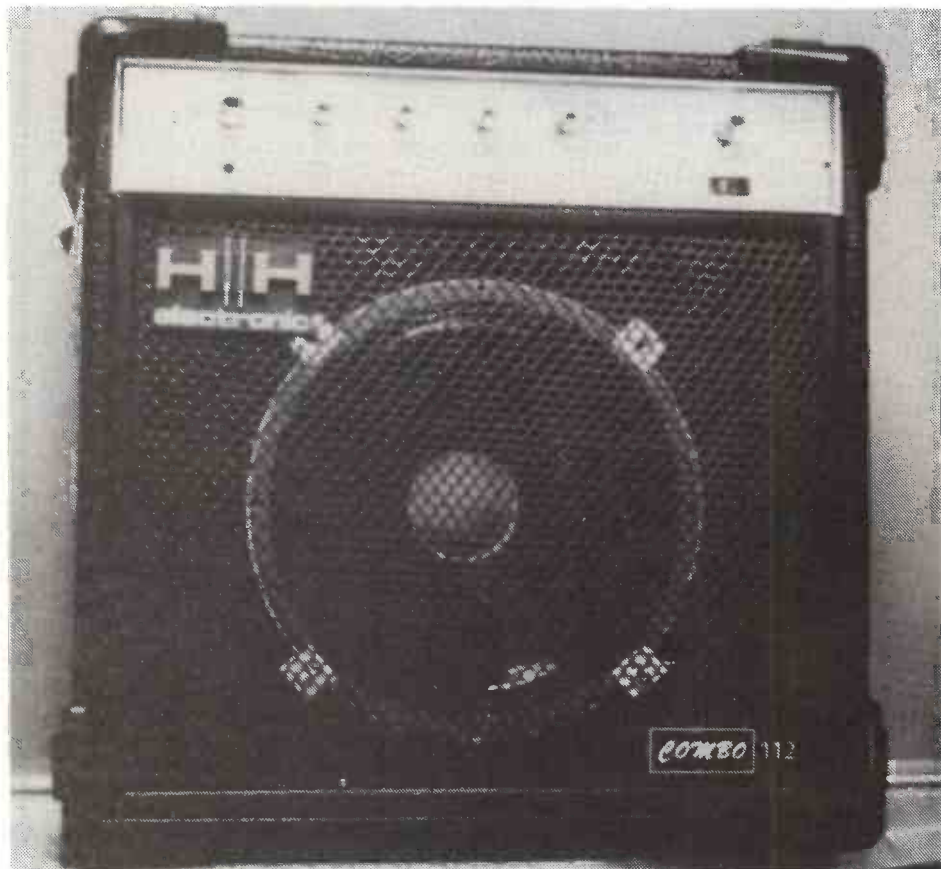
Right, can we get on with it now please? Well, yes, it's very easy on the eye, *just* the natty unit to be carrying around when you arrive — on time of course — for a fancy recording session. Very I'm The Studio Fifty, Play Me. The controls, too, are pert. Left to right: gain, bass plus and minus, middle nought to ten, treble plus and minus, reverb nought to ten and master volume. Underneath, left to right, you have the input, an effects input (din plug here) and under the master volume, the on/off switch. And of course, that old green light comes on behind the panel when you've got contact. The small recess at the rear has access to fuse, voltage selector and pre-amp output.

You look at all this and you want to hug it. Instead, though, you get out that jackplug, grab the nearest Aria and pile straight into Kentucky Fried Blues. The gain acquitted itself honourably, but when I got to the middle a little while later they appeared to fulfil much the same function. More gain is really like more middle. Or maybe piling on the middle is like topping up the gain, I'm not sure which. So you just shrug happily and play them off against each other.

In fact, with the assistance of the superb and very middley Aria, things began cooking along quite nicely. Minus positions never interest me. Plus bass did just that, but to more pleasing effect than plus treble. This was only because bass and middle are more aesthetically pleasing than thin, piercing treble. Treble always has to be lined with just a little middle so that it hums. You know what I mean. Going over the reverb control like David Hemery over a hurdle on a good day, you come to master volume, find it quite standard, and return reluctantly to the reverb. All I can say is that it reverb on a low setting and goes off like a firecracker nearer the ten. Tinny and popular — I don't get it.

Just as you're looking at the effects input, HH smartly appear holding the Clockwork Concubine (£43.39) in one hand and a reverb footswitch (£15.12) in the other. Both units, obviously, are eminently compatible but of course you can use what you like once you've applied the din plug. Unfortunately, we didn't have the opportunity to try them out.

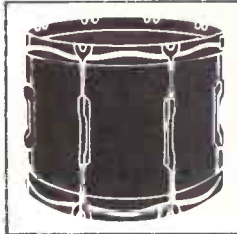
On the face of it this sounds like a very saucy review. It isn't at all. I'm still not mad about HH, and there's still no real reason, but the Studio Fifty is a clean-sounding winner, ringing reverb as a nice extra, and I sincerely wish it all the very best. At £169.07 inc. VAT it is very definitely worth investigating. Sincerely.



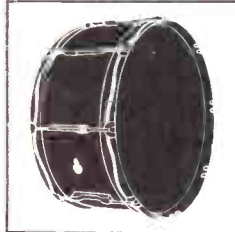
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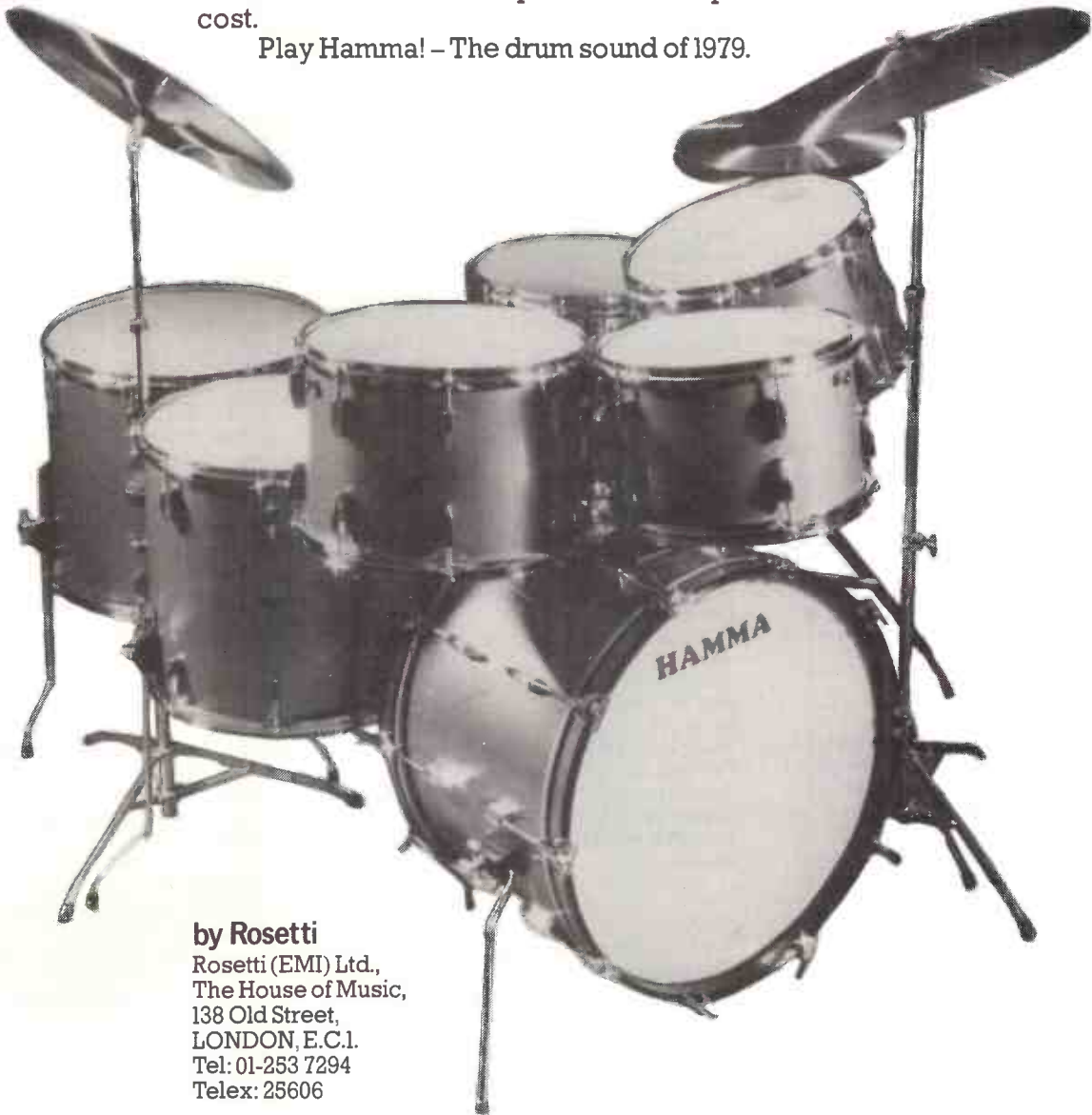


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INSTRUMENT REVIEW

Drums



HAMMA 770 DRUM KIT

Price: £449.95

Reviewed by: Tony Horkins

Hamma drums are made by Rosetti who in turn have something to do with the massive EMI conglomerate. This is easy to tell because everywhere you see Hamma printed on the kit the letters EMI sit proudly underneath.

The 770 we received for review was yellow — not my favourite colour but never mind. It's also available in white, black and copper, with a light blue still in the making. I would imagine that the kit would look great in the other colours as the finish is very trim indeed.

The kit consists of a 22" bass drum, a 13" x 9" tom-tom, a 14" x 10" tom-tom, a 16" x 16" floor tom-tom and a 14" x 5½" de-luxe metal snare, chromium plated. Also with the kit you get a bass drum pedal, snare drum stand with tri-pod base, hi-hat stand with tri-pod base, two cymbal stands with tri-pod bases and a double tom-tom holder. Oh yes, you also get a pair of sticks and a pair of brushes thrown in, but as the sticks were Premier Es I broke them after about three minutes playing: All this you get for a comparatively cheap £449.95, without cymbals.

Hamma were kind enough to supply us with a pair of their bronze 880 high-hat cymbals of which I actually own a pair and are excellent value at £27, and 18" and 20" cymbals of which I can recommend the 18", also good value at £26.50. And so, to details:

Bass Drum

I'm afraid I didn't have much joy with the bass drum. I had some felts stretched against the skin, the front skin removed and a few old rags in the drum, but I just couldn't get a happy sound. Although dead, the sound was wet and sloppy. I personally prefer something a lot crisper and tighter with a lot more definition, but never mind. Perhaps a Power-Pad would have helped. The legs folded on the outside of the drum instead of tucking inside, and they gave way once in about a three hour session.

Tom Toms

Fortunately, I had more joy with the toms. Built in dampeners helped to get a



good dead sound. After doing so I was well pleased with the sound. Very round, moderately loud with the skins giving plenty of bounce. That reminds me, the kit comes fitted with Premier Everplay Extra Plus heads all round, tops and bottoms of all drums. I was particularly impressed with the sound of the floor tom-tom — really meaty.

Snare Drum

Again, I wasn't too happy with this. The snares are attached using the string arrangement and drummers will know what tends to happen to them. I had a problem with them too. After doing the snares up tight while on release I couldn't pull the lever up because it was just too tight.

I had to sacrifice a bit of tightness to be able to actually use the snares. I couldn't seem to get a decent sound out of the snare whatever I tightened or loosened, so I ended up with a sound not too dissimilar from a constant rim shot. I believe that the snares on the drum may have been faulty, and this would obviously cause the poor sound.

Stands

It looks like a few sacrifices have been made with the stands, because they're a bit on the flimsy side. The rods that the snare drum rests on were particularly thin. I also had a bit of trouble with the high-hat stand. To be able to get my foot in a comfortable position I was forced to push the whole thing too far away from me for comfort.

Also the cymbal stands were a bit on the wobbly side when a real smash on the cymbals was called for. The double tom-tom holder caused a bit of trouble too as I experienced a slipping with the right-hand tom, but I could obtain almost any Tom positioning that I may have required.

All the joints however were well finished in PTFE (the stuff they make non-stick frying pans out of to you).

Bass Drum Pedal

This 7251 pedal I feel indifferent about. It's got a cloth grip on it instead of a metal one and I've had trouble in the past with those. The beater was a nice solid wooden one with notches for high adjustment. I had some trouble at first because it came back so fast it whacked me on the ankle every time I started getting excited. I made a few adjustments though and this mishap eventually ceased. I also hate to report that it came off in the middle of one number — thank God it was a rehearsal! It's adjustable angle wise as well so that you can turn it towards or away from you without having to touch the clasp. And it is also fitted with Anchors.

Conclusion

It may well appear that I've just ripped this kit to shreds but, in overall use it wasn't a bad performer. After all, that price of £500 isn't *the* expensive by today's standards, and it's probably worth your while to go and suss it out for yourself. I'd just like to add that I'd like to have seen a metal rim around the bass drum at this price, because a bass drum pedal really does leave its marks.

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ARIA P.E. 600

Price: £286.90 inc. VAT
and hard case

Reviewed by: Tom Stock

No — don't groan just because it's another Aria! Rather, be cheerful that Aria seem able to turn out model after model which both warrant our attention, and ultimately, our praise. I suspect that my colleague Simmonds will already have made reference to squirrels and branches, so I'll let my particularly tortuous metaphors have a well-earned month's rest.

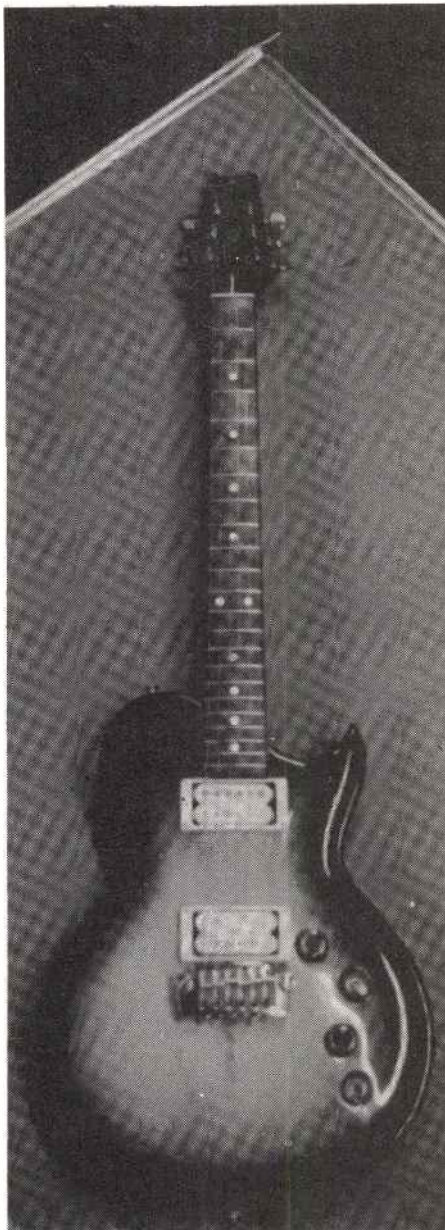
Tobacco

The first thing that strikes the casual observer of this instrument is its plain, simple beauty. It begs to be looked after. The tobacco sunburst finish on our review model had a deep, almost magical quality to it, although I don't intend to wax too lyrical about it at this stage! Suffice to say the overall physical impressions were extremely favourable: and yes, the guitar sounds and plays exactly as it looks.

Resemble

Talking of looks, I suppose the PE 600 does loosely resemble a Les Paul but it's more rounded and shapely — almost in a feminine sense — and the general opinion is that it's much more reminiscent of the way John Birch puts his guitars together. The back of the body is beautifully curved and sits well against the player. The materials used are: sycamore for the body, which is perhaps an unusual choice, three ply maple for the neck and a rosewood fingerboard. The machine heads are Aria's own MG55Cs and once one has deciphered the delightfully saucy English translation of the accompanying leaflet (see the bass review for the fuller story) it transpires that the tension is adjustable. The tool is a very small wrench almost which slots into a hole on the machine head and will tighten or loosen the resistance required to tune up. It's a handy little tool but it strikes me as being a little unnecessary.

Pick-ups are Proto-matic 4s — twin coil



with a healthy output, and the bridge allows plenty of individual string adjustment, backwards and forwards. I must add that the PE 600 came into the office perfectly set up and there was no need for me to fiddle around with the bridge settings: I cannot comment therefore on whether the adjustment is satisfactory in practice as to have mucked around with it would probably have upset it. Controls are simple — two rotary, one for volume and one for tone, and the toggle switch sits in a neatly rounded out hole. Just below, still on the face of the guitar and therefore where we like it, is the jack socket. The rotary knobs are nice and fat — although the volume seems a mite close to the treble p/u — and make a brave attempt at matching the body with two small, circular veneered inlay tops.

Shrinks

The unequivocal delight expressed at the Aria's appearance is only matched by the

sheer joy of playing the axe: strapped on it shrinks noticeably again from its comparatively small size anyway and just becomes an extension of its wearer. I guess I liked it! The action was excellent and the strings — Gigsville the importers couldn't say whether they were Fender, Gibson or what — seemed to suit the action and fingerboard.

Warm

The overall sound of this Aria was tremendously 'warm' — you're not going to find yourself shattering glasses from a hundred yards with screaming treble — because there's not a lot of that going. On the other hand, there's so much middle and bass available to play with that you'll probably end up not wanting that jangling — anyway, there's always the treble and presence control on the amp, isn't there? I guess in some ways those remarks are something of a cop out as any guitar should be capable of offering as wide a variety of sound as is possible. However, in this instance, let's say that the Aria is balanced predominantly towards the blues, the gruff and the warm, rather than the scream, the jangle and the bite!

The guitar was eminently playable in every respect: the frets in particular I found well filed off and rounded allowing easy slide playing, and the fingerboard offered no restriction on the bending front at all.

The Aria PE 600 falls into the Beat collective bag of highly favoured instruments then because, having found very little indeed to say against, the final analysis must be made in the price context: £286 is out of the copy field, and yet still well short of the American league and the upper echelons of the competitive Japanese. £286 for this guitar, however, is nearly a joke 'cos it's a damn sight better than perhaps its price — which includes the hard case don't forget — might suggest.

The workmanship throughout is excellent, and the guitar exudes a quality that its cost belies. (P.s. my home address is . . .)

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JOHN ENTWISTLE:

The first question, obviously, concerns the position of the band since Keith's death. What's happening now?

We are continuing with projects we started when he was still alive — The Kids Are Alright film, which is finished, the Quadrophenia film, which we've finished shooting and are now putting the sound to.

Is the sound track totally made up of old recordings?

It includes a lot of old songs, two or three new numbers plus most of the stuff that was on the Quadrophenia album.

Was Keith on the new stuff?

No. Kenny Jones is on a few.

Is Kenny joining you permanently?

I'm not at liberty to say right now. He is playing with us at the moment.

Why did you select Kenny — he's certainly very different from Keith?

He is, to a certain extent, but I imagine that drummers tend to change when they get in a different band. I'm sure it will change the music — how, I don't know yet. Keith was starting to play differently on the last album, simpler stuff. As far as stage is concerned, we all play differently.

Are there plans for the Who to do live performances in the foreseeable future?

I sincerely hope so. At the moment we are just concerned with finishing the film, but we will be planning tours as soon as possible.

But is Pete willing to tour?

Pete seems to change his mind day to day.

Does this cause problems?

He *likes* touring but he's getting more into the business side of things. He doesn't mind touring as long as it fits in with his home life, whereas my home

Plans for the Who and bass playing

life doesn't seem to fit in unless I'm touring. Two months in the studio doesn't give you as much joy as one night on stage.

You are producing the film albums: do the others have any involvement?

Yes, if they want it. I don't think Pete's seen the film yet. He'll probably see it at the premiere for the first time. When it's all mixed everyone will get a cassette saying 'this is the album'.

Have you had to adapt your style to fit in with Kenny's style?

Playing with Keith must have been one of the hardest jobs imaginable. It used to get to the stage where I would have to walk back and look at his feet to work out what beat he was playing. There were some things I wanted to play that I couldn't with him.

What were the band's feelings towards the last couple of albums you've released? Who Are You, for example, didn't receive much acclaim.

I don't know, I've got a few gold records hanging up around the place. I don't take any notice of what reviewers say. What it boils down to is if the public buy it. Who Are You sold a lot nearer the figures for Who's Next than The Who By Numbers did.

How much rehearsing do — or did — you do before a tour?

Two days.



But now with Kenny ...

Three days.

You've upgraded your gear recently, haven't you?

I don't use the old Sunn Coliseum amps any more. I'm using two Stramp stereo pre-amps and four slave amps. I'm also using a slightly different kind of 18" cabinet, and very large 4 x 12 cabinets, rear loaded horn type of arrangement.

What is the current power of your stage gear?

The amps are supposed to be powered at about 375 watts. I use four ...

So that's about 1500 watts. Is that kind of power really necessary?

It is for me. I don't trust my sound going through the PA. There's a certain amount of bass you just can't get through a PA system unless you have your own set up and equalise it yourself. The PA that we used to use is now on stage to brighten things up a bit ... as monitors. That's about 7000 watts. We hire the PA, anything between 50,000 and 77,000 watts. Some of the big halls are difficult to fill ... if the

“Everything has to be turned up so that I can get the sustain”





by Mike Hunt

the band depends on any touring we'll be doing in the next two years. If we don't tour soon, then the fundamental thing which has held the band together is just not going to be there anymore.

Would, in that event, you stop playing?

No, I think I'll always need a vehicle for my music.

You couldn't slot into another band, then — your bass style is different after all, isn't it?

Not another band, but I can think of a number of musicians with whom I'd like to work.

Going back to Kenny for a moment — he's not really in the Keith Moon mould of drumming is he?

Well, is anybody? We didn't want a replacement Keith; that would have been undesirable and virtually impossible. We needed a new drummer and Kenny is the man. He's not played with us yet live, so we don't know how he's going to affect the music, but it's unfair to suggest that because he's not the Keith type that he isn't as good, or won't be as productive. He's played in an awful lot of bands — most of which haven't really allowed him to use his full potential as an instrumentalist.

Speaking of that, you've got quite a range of instruments yourself haven't you?

Yeah — one hundred and twenty eight at the last count!

Why keep so many?

I've always vowed to myself that I'd never sell a guitar that I used on stage — in the old days, though, it was different. I remember I sold a '63 Precision because I didn't like the sound and then bought a Gibson to find that my speakers had blown — and until very recently I hadn't found another Precision that really, in retrospect, was as good as that one I sold!

Do you play them all?

Oh yeah, occasionally I'll go up to the guitar room and have a session. I've got about forty six string guitars as well — mainly Gibson Explorers and Flying Vs, and about 15 Gretschs. But I'm used to playing the Precision bass: that's what I started on and then went onto the Gibson Thunderbird. Around '66 the Precisions had wide, flat necks and I developed my style on that kind of neck — although I can play a lot faster on a medium scale bass, and even faster on a short scale. □

stage is hollow, you can lose even more bass. Everything *has* to be turned up so that I can get the sustain.

So how do you achieve the same effect in the studio?

I can't stand DIing. I use a Boogie, stereo with an extension cable, and a Music Man.

Are the Who planning another album?

We're thinking of going into the studio around mid-summer time at the moment, but then a number of things could change those rough plans. Pete's just starting a solo album so that might be a factor affecting our future plans as well.

How has the New Wave affected you? Pete's said a lot on the subject in public already, hasn't he?

Well, it's the same as everything else — there's some good stuff in it and there's a lot of rubbish too. It's stopped some good musicians making it. I've always like to play raunchy music anyway — I've little interest in aerie faerie complicated stuff. In the early days when we were just learning to play we still played that kind of raunchy stuff, but, that BOF thing got on me: why should we, just because we're thirty or so, and able to play, make

way for people who can't play an instrument? Why should we stop?

I mean, as far as I'm concerned, I haven't even started to write songs or play bass yet: there's still so much for me to learn.

Are you contemplating another solo album for yourself?

If I've got the time, yes; but I'm not thinking about jumping on the Superstar Friends solo bandwagon: I need musicians that I like, that can play, and with whom I can play as well.


Do you see the Who continuing for a time yet?

I think it depends on how much we tour in the next couple of years: we'll still carry on making albums. Up until two years ago the Who kept together because of the enjoyment we got out of each other's playing on stage: for the last two years we've kept together for the possibility of playing together on stage. I think if it came down to a decision that we were never going to tour again, then the Who wouldn't be together. We have always been a live band, and haven't achieved much success without playing: we didn't actually achieve much success in the States until we'd played virtually everywhere at least twice. But yes, the whole future of

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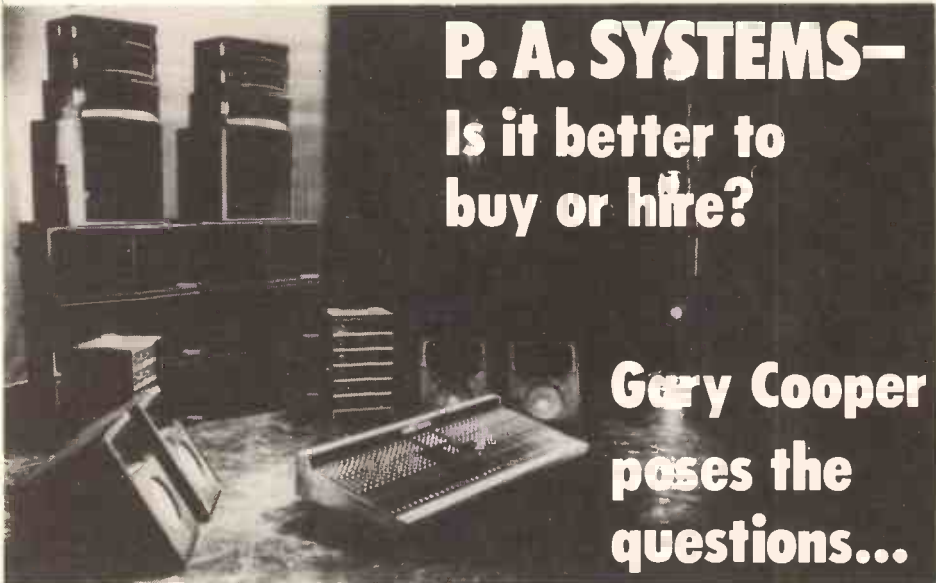
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P. A. SYSTEMS— Is it better to buy or hire?

Gery Cooper poses the questions...

Possibly the single biggest problem faced by bands today is finance. Old timers might snort at this and recall the days when they were picking up ten shillings a night for their gigs — but it's harder today for a band to get on the road than it was even five years ago.

The reasons are complex and to go into them in detail would require much more space than I have. In a nutshell though, we can cite two major causes, low prices paid for support bands by club owners (see my article in BEAT December for the full story), combined with higher sound quality expectations by club owners and concert goers.

Obviously the biggest single area of expense for any band (short of actual recording, but this is almost always covered by record companies), is the PA system. It might be boring to read it but it's still a fact that, not too many years ago, *no-one* used any more than 100 watts for PA. The Beatles, the Stones, even bands as late as the Yardbirds, never went on stage in Britain (during the major part of their careers as touring bands) with any more than a 100 watt Vox or Selmer PA amp and two 4×12 columns! Not even a college circuit band can get away with that sort of system these days — it wouldn't even do for monitoring!

Even quite recently a "good" PA system was little more than half a dozen WEM 100 watt amps slaved together through a mixture of 4×10's and 12's. But those days have most emphatically changed, and 1,000 watts, which would have been considered a phenomenal volume level seven or eight years ago, is nothing by the strange standards of 1979.

This presents almost any band with a problem. You can certainly still play very small clubs through 100 and 200 watt systems but, if you do get the lucky break of playing a bigger gig and can't borrow the main band's PA system, what do you do?

Obviously, you hire a system, but that can set you back rather more than you're getting for the gig! Already the harsh realities of life on the road are beginning to bite, and you can see from here how many problems bands like Queen have in getting their show on the road. If it cost you £150

to hire your system, think what it costs *them* to get 30,000 watts on the road!

Obviously, in the old days, things were simpler. Every member of the band provided his own instruments and amps, the singer bought mikes and a PA. Nowadays, with almost every instrument being miked-up, it isn't that straightforward. A band's PA is used by almost everyone and costs are shared accordingly.

The question of whether you actually *need* to mike-up a whole band here is a moot point. Far too many bands assume that they need to strain and torture their PA system by stuffing absolutely *everything* through an old WEM Audiomaster and four 4×12's. This doesn't have to be the case — especially not for the sort of gigs that most Beat readers will be playing.

To start with bass, that torturer and wrecker of PA systems, doesn't need to go through a PA until quite large venues are being tackled. Providing the bass player has a 100 (preferably 200) watt stack he can quite easily be heard in the average club, even if he doesn't go through the PA. Don't forget that John Entwistle quite frequently doesn't go through the Who's PA even *now*! Overloading bass bins with bass guitar can be quite unnecessary in small to average clubs. The main function of a PA in clubs shouldn't be for volume anyway, for heaven's sake.

In a club you simply do not *need* the phenomenal power of a major PA system, what you want is balance. Put your vocals and backing vocals through the PA system, maybe even drums, guitar if the guitarist hasn't got a big stack, and keyboards too can go through the PA, but don't use your system for volume, use it to give a smooth overall balance between each of the instruments.

But this feature is supposed to be hiring versus buying. Many shops up and down the country hire PA these days and bands are torn between hiring a variety of rigs (many of which are quite unbelievably tatty) and scraping together enough bread to buy one of their own. Probably the best advice is as follows.

If your band is down at the very bottom

of the league, stick to PA for the vocals. Buy a basic WEM, Marshall, Hi-Watt or HH PA amp and use your back line for main power. This will get through school gigs, small clubs of all sorts, although you won't rival Zeppelin or Genesis, you'll still be heard.

Moving on from there we begin to come into more 'professional' systems. Assuming that you've a reasonable flow of money coming in from gigs and day jobs, you can start buying new or secondhand 'proper' PA equipment. The key here, in my opinion, is to buy with a definite plan in mind. Get some idea of the ultimate system you'd like to build-up and work on a building-block principle. Ideal here, of course, is the excellent unit PA system offered by HH. For my money they seem to make the most professional of medium scale PA systems (I think they'd accept that their gear wouldn't be right for Wembley Stadium) and that is by no means a criticism because they're aiming at a totally different market).

So, ditch your 4×12 columns *but don't sell them*. Until you can afford proper monitors, they'll make excellent wedges when propped up at the front of the stage.

Building up unit PA's is quite easy. You simply save enough bread for a bass/mid bin at either side of the stage and start there. This need by nothing more than a 15" or 12" speaker with a Piezo horn for top. When you get more money add a proper bass bin, using your old one for mid. More money still and you can add something like a 4 Piezo array.

Unless you're opting for something which is really special here (like the HH system) you could bear in mind at this stage the extra prices asked for 'name brand' speaker cabinets. Many small manufacturers up and down the country offer their own speaker cabs either empty or with a variety of speakers in them. Quite often big name brands are made to the same designs as those of the shop down the road and there's little to be gained, providing the constructional quality is adequate, in buying the big name cab unless it offers a genuine design extra of some sort.

Another option, of course, is to build bins yourself. This is easy for anyone with a garage a bit of woodworking skill. J.B.L. in fact offer a set of plans which you can use for any brand of speaker. Anyone with a bit of time and ability can knock up their own bins and put whatever speakers they like in them. In fairness to the open-handed honesty of JBL, however, I should point out that recent price reductions have made their speakers excellent value for money (and I like the sound of them anyway!).

I don't like quoting prices in articles like these as they can vary so much due to price fluctuations and sources of supply, but a 1K (1,000 watt) rig can cost around £2,000 upwards. You can do it cheaper, by building your own bins and buying secondhand equipment, but that's a guide for a complete system new at a budget figure. The best way to approach the problem is to build up what you need as you need it. A bin here, a new desk there, and it all comes together with time and patience.

One word while we're still on bought systems. Having said earlier that it is perfectly safe to buy bins almost anywhere (providing they are reasonably well made and contain 'name brand' speakers), electronics are a totally different kettle of fish. Here it is always safer to buy a name. Power amps from HH, Marshall MM etc. are good buys and you can rely on them being servicable almost anywhere in Britain (and Europe), which is not always the same for equipment made by very small companies.

Eventually, having reached a 1K rig, you are now faced with a leap. 1K will give you the power to balance your sound in most small clubs and amplify much of your band's sound. It will not, however, give you the meat you need for gigs like London's Music Machine. Quite probably it won't offer sufficiently good sound quality to make the impact that you need to make at prestige venues like these either. Here you have to decide whether to go on buying or to hire.

Most bands find their careers being split into two distinct sections. There's the time when you are doing a lot of work (for next to nothing), playing pubs and clubs where 1,000 watts is sufficient power to give you a reasonable sound. Then, beyond this point, you suddenly start 'breaking'. You get the chance of a record deal and start playing larger venues where 1K is just too small. The jump now isn't from 1K to 1.3K but from 1-3 or even 4K.

Co-incidentally you now start working less. Tours rather than just an endless

succession of gigs become the order of the day and, because of this, owning that sort of PA just doesn't seem on. It's now that you have to decide what to do.

The hire of rigs in excess of 1K is expensive but, nonetheless, makes more sense unless you are doing an awful lot of work, than buying. The sort of bands who *do* go in for buying big rigs these days tend to be working the more lucrative, reliable and regular circuits like the Mecca Dance Halls, Discos and Cabaret clubs. Here the bread is more or less regular and a good deal better than Rock bands can attract. For a band who can make that sort of gig a regular phenomenon, buying a 2k plus rig can make sense.

There is another area where buying can make more sense, and that's if you think that you can make money hiring your PA out to other bands. That's not as crazy as it sounds, either. Certain areas of the country (especially the North) are not at all well served by PA hire organisations, who tend to be centralised around London and the South East, and a band with enough money to buy a 2K rig of good quality can often pay for it out of hiring fees to other bands! They can even contemplate giving up music altogether after a while for the altogether more lucrative business of hiring PA's!

Some surprisingly big bands actually started out PA hire this way. Pink Floyd, for example, own what is arguably the best PA system in the country. Having decided to buy rather than hire they have amassed a most amazing collection of gear which

they will hire to almost anyone from their headquarters at Britannia Row.

Run by Robbie Williams (you may remember a story on Floyd's PA in Beat several years ago when Robbie was just getting into hiring out the Floyd rig), the Floyd PA can be broken down as small as 1K and cost about £150 for a gig at a London venue like Dingwall's with 3-4K of gear. For that sort of money you'd have access to one of the best PA's in Britain. For the band whose gigs are being underwritten by financial support from a record company, or who regard gigs like this as an investment, £150 doesn't seem too much to pay.

As you can see, the occasional gigs of this size call for a much larger PA than you'd normally use and the one-off hiring makes more sense than investing in a complete system which would hardly ever get used. Of course some organisations will let you hire equipment to augment your own rig and that's worth considering as well. Even if your own PA isn't up to augmenting something as professional as the Britannia Row rig it may well do as your on-stage monitoring system.

To get comparisons from two other areas of Britain I spoke also to Biggles Music of Bristol and Axis of Bournemouth. Biggles Music sell PA as well as hiring it and they confirmed my own suspicions that the sort of bands who tend to buy large rigs are those who have plenty of well-paid work. Most bands are like corks bobbing on the ocean, only occasionally do they rise up to the top and need a rig bigger

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than 1-2K. At this stage they can hire on a one-off basis. From Biggles, a 3K rig, used locally, will cost around £110 plus VAT. For this you'd get an impressive rig which has found a great deal of favour among local bands.

There is, of course, some element of unpredictability in hiring PA's in towns where you're just doing a one-off gig, which is why major bands contract to one company for a whole tour and don't hire from different sources in every area. If you do find yourself needing a bigger PA for a prestige gig in a new town then try asking bands from that area what they use or, perhaps better still, ask the promoter. If you can afford the trucking costs, hire one from your area (a rig which you already know and have used before) and take it with you. Most bands can't afford this however and so you should try and make a few checks on the system you're thinking of hiring well in advance of the date in question.

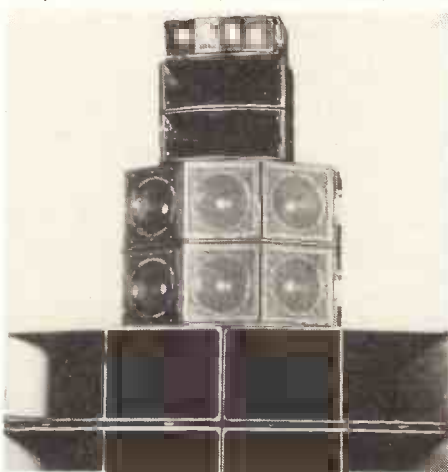
Axis, who operate in Bournemouth but also reach as far away as Southampton offer a good deal for their local bands. You can get a 1.3K rig off of them for only £50 to £55 which is pretty good value. They too find that bands own their own rigs for the smaller venues and then hire a bigger one for the odd gig that calls for it.

Another proposition that makes a lot of sense is for bands to club together and hire one between them. Suppose that you're booked for a College gig twenty miles away. The chances are you know the other bands on the bill. If you do you can either

pool your respective PSs and hire a few bits and pieces that you might need (maybe a graphic or a bigger desk) or you can join forces and hire a complete PA.

One point to watch is that many companies will charge extra for a mixer and road crew. This might well seem to you a luxury but you should never forget that even a brilliant PA can be ruined by bad assembly or incorrect useage. Try to make sure that you either have a pretty clever crew of your own or a hired expert. He can save a heavy investment from going sour.

To recap, therefore, it seems that most bands can, and should, buy PA's up to the level of regular demands of the club work they thrive on. This, in most cases, takes



you to around 1 to 2,000 watts. Beyond that you'll be doing, on average, less gigs than before and will be better off hiring. There are no golden rules, however, and you might well be wise to consider buying a bigger rig and hiring it out to pay for the times when you're not using it. Big rigs need regular work to pay for themselves and very few bands do enough work to pay for much above 4K without hiring their equipment out to others. Floyd took that route (as did Supertramp in the U.S.A.) but you may not fancy the administration costs of looking after a hire concern when you're trying to be a musician.

If I were faced with the problem of getting a band under way this year I'd probably go right out and buy an HH Unit PA system of around 1K. I'd use that for local club gigs and hire when it becomes too small to cope. Alternatively I'd work up from the four tatty old WEM columns and build a small PA bit by bit. Buy more than 1K's worth of gear? No, I honestly don't think I would, unless there weren't any decent hire companies in the area I was working in. For me the costs of buying, maintaining, storing and transporting that much PA gear for the relatively small number of gigs a semi-pro or just pro band would do wouldn't seem worth the cost.

All this is just a suggestion, however, so why not write in to Beat and tell us what your band does? It would be interesting to know if our readers agree with us or can recount any experiences they've had which have either confirmed or contradicted our experience!

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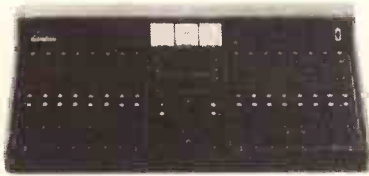
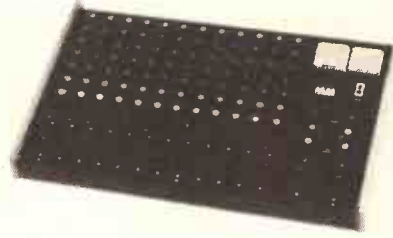
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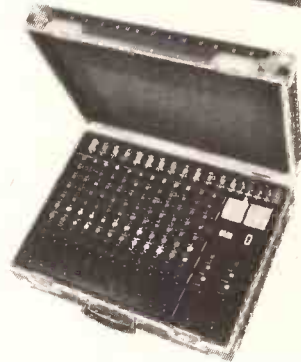


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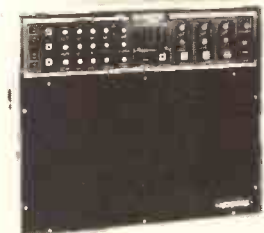
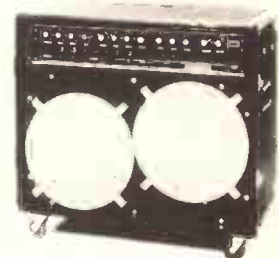
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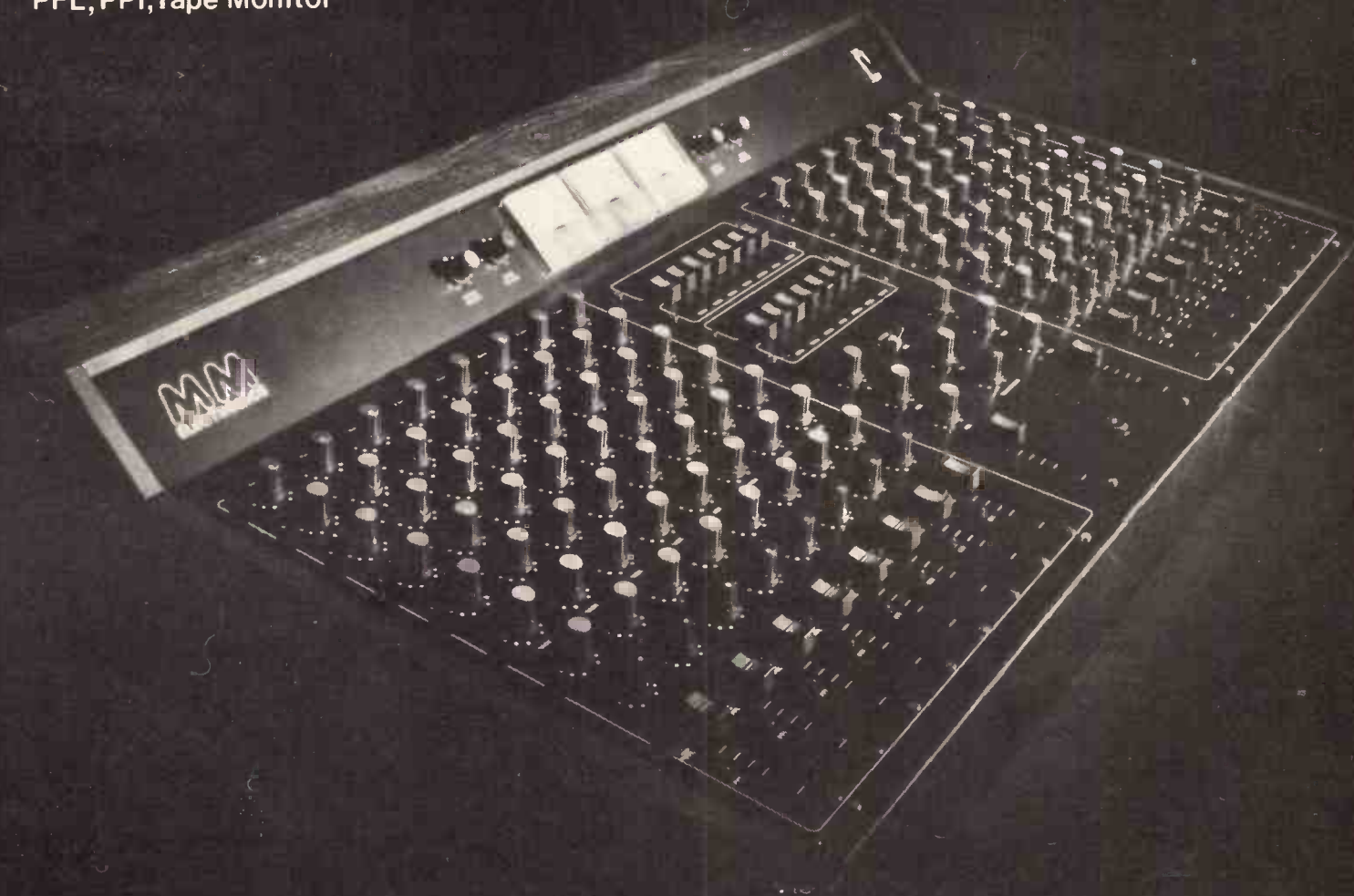
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IN THE RED NOISE ZONE

Let's start the usual way, happily commenting on how easy it is to interview Bill Nelson. It's very easy to interview Bill Nelson. You just turn the tape recorder on, ask a question and then settle back in your chair, glancing at the machine every five or ten minutes to check that you still have some tape left.

When it clicks you're at the end of side one and you have to haul yourself out of the chair, hold your hand fingers up palm towards Bill so that he pauses for a moment, and flip the tape over. I did all this and Bill did his bit; talking about his new band and his current attitude to equipment.

Direction

This new band, of course, is Red Noise, but it is a little rude to interrupt just when Bill's starting. "Breaking away from Be Bop Deluxe was already in the air about a year before it happened, but the management told me that the timing wasn't right then. I knew it was going to have to happen sooner or later as I just wasn't fulfilled within Be Bop. We made an effort with Drastic Plastic to move in the sort of direction I've now taken up with Red Noise, but the band had fallen foul of the strictures it had set on itself. It had become more what other people wanted it to be than what I wanted it to be. Even now with a new band, my main worry is that people will still want to hear the old Be Bop numbers. With every respect to the current members of Red Noise, the idea of a permanent band is slightly abhorrent to me."

Let's stop for a minute to pop Red Noise into a bag so we all know what we're



talking about here. On the strength of Sound To Sound, their debut album, it's firmly in the Talking Heads/XTC area of the New Wave style, ie. a thinking man's punk. Lots of abrasive chords and jerky rhythms, Bill concentrating on chords and singing rather than lead work or too much synthesized guitar overdubbing. But, as I always say when I interrupt Bill — sorry, go on.

"I've had nightmares about the gigs. The band is different and we therefore run the risk of not carrying that many Be Bop fans with us. I didn't want us to do any Be Bop numbers but I was advised by the people who

don't actually have to go up there and do it that I should do fifty percent. I won't do that but I suppose I'll have to include a few at the end. The main thing is that this band is not a continuation of Be Bop Deluxe. We have decided to take the risk of being quite different."

Despite the New Wave

like my other main guitar, the Yamaha 2000. It does sustain well — I think that comes from its sheer density although it is that thin, and also because the nut and bridge are solid brass. The one that I have is made out of curly maple, with an ebony strip right down the middle. It is stereo wired with phase switches plus something called a Stage Switch which gives you three different tonalities on each pickup.

Impressed

"You've got your standard toggle where you can put either or both in, then you've got a choice of stereo, mono or out of phase, plus your switch for each pickup. They wind their own pickups — it's just like a black block, with no screws or pole pieces to be seen on the outside. I was shown around the workshop, and I was very impressed. I may add that I bought the guitar — they don't give them away for endorsement.

"It has a 25 fret neck, and the unusual thing about it is that it doesn't have any inlays on the face of the neck, it's just black all the way down. There are little dots on the edge, but I've become so used to having markers with the Yamaha that I'm not sure yet if I can use it live. I have already used it in the studio, however.

Intonation

"It's nothing like a Gibson or a Fender copy; I suppose the nearest guitar is a BC Rich. It's quite unique; it has a longish curved cutaway at the top, and despite the fact that it has twenty five frets the intonation is very good all the way down. I did have a bit of trouble with string tensions to start with. They seemed a little tense, but I didn't really want to go on to a lighter gauge, so we rectified the problem by heightening the tailpiece. I think the strings he used were da Vinci, something I hadn't tried before, but I still

□□□

Density

"I had a guitar made for me in America, which I'm extremely pleased about. I never get the name right — I think it's Viellet Citroen; the guy is Joe Viellet. It's a very slim guitar, almost like a Watkins Rapier — nothing

BILL NELSON

preferred Rotosound so I put a set of those on the guitar." As to Bill's choice of gauge, he still favours running from nines through to forty twos.

"The main thing with the guitar," he concluded, "is that unlike the Yamaha you just don't know that you're wearing it across your chest. You're not aware of the guitar of any weight. It's just there." You may remember that the last time Bill was in the pages of *Beat* he was complaining about the way his trusty old 345 Gibson had lost a lot of its sound after being given certain renovations.

Back seat

The situation hasn't changed, so the Gibson is still occupying more of a back seat. In its place as his second guitar is a Stratocaster. In view of the band's more simplistic ap-



Bill with a fan — oh alright, an electric heater.

proach, Bill has also jet-tisoned some of his effects Noise album is probably the first one I've ever made besides the Patch. "The Red where I plugged directly into

"The band is different and we therefore run the risk of not carrying that many Be-Bop fans with us."

an amplifier," he asserted.

"I think I used the flanger for a couple of things, but mainly it was just going through the Boogie, quite a change from my old Carlsbro cabinets and the big effects pedalboard. I'm extremely happy with the Boogie although I would like to find a cleaner sound as another option. It has a little switch to go from channel to channel, but the clean one maybe isn't as clean as it could be for a few rhythm sounds. So maybe I'll get another small amp as well. Everything won't become apparent in terms of the sound I need until we move to larger rehearsal rooms."

From the rehearsal rooms Red Noise move onto the streets, taking it to the public in the perpetual new band effort to persuade them that it really is something completely different. Bill has a clear idea of what he wants, as shown by his thought on the equipment front. All he needs is the punters to want the same thing . . .

C.S.

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It's been almost two years since Beat Instrumental put binoculars to Landscape, in the wake of the band scooping the first Vitavox Live Sound award. Since then the five-man, all-electric lineup replete with unique features, has been going places. The regular pub/club/college gigging circuit not only included braving a few punk venues in their prime, more significantly it also featured enterprises like a series of lunchtime dates around London designed to captivate what Landscape believed was a potentially much wider audience.

Aided by the self-help climate of new wave, in late '77 they formed their own company, Event Horizon, which covered the management, agency and publishing sides as well as providing a label for two strong-selling EPs, 'U1XMe1X2Much' ('You two-timed me...') and 'Worker's Playtime'. Having become synonymous with the best in rockbiz autonomy, certain new developments on the Landscape horizon may at first seem quite surprising.

Trombonist Pete Thoms opened the batting: "Our policy over the last two years has indeed been that of a completely independent organisation; that carried us through that period and got us where we are today. But now we've found the time has come for us to seek outside help.

"A year ago we felt it was right to put out a live EP; now we feel it's time to put out a really well crafted studio record and to do that we need a lot more money. We have been doing OK, making a living gigging and selling EPs, but we certainly didn't want to put ourselves in hock making an album."

Landscape have by now quite firmly defined their indefinable musical idiom — a vivid mix of boogie, jazz, electronics and bedrock which they prefer to call "pop music". But weren't they going to come up against the age-old syndrome that everything must be neatly bagged and tagged?

"We're afraid that some record companies see the band in primarily jazz terms," confirmed Pete, "but others with more imagination and flair have been able to see us in wider terms.

"Everything we do now," said drummer Richard Burgess, "we do very slowly, we test out the ground before we go, and I think we've proved to ourselves and everybody else that we can secure a very big audience. Several companies have approached us in this light, and although we're not rushing in probably by the time this interview comes out we'll have signed something. We've never actually shunned the idea of big organisations, but we didn't want to get involved at the point where they could change us."

One hitch for A&R departments might be that Landscape have no singer and no guitar either, come to that. John Walters, their flute and sax man, gave his view:

"Popular music at the moment is moving to a point where words have no importance at all, they're just vowel shapes for musicians to use. Plus there seem to be very few significant lyrics being written currently. I think the future will see a lot more commercial instrumental music once more."

However, whatever the weather on the

LANDSCAPE

A picture by Linnet Evans



L-R Christopher Heaton, Richard Burgess, Peter Thoms, John Walters, Andy Pask.

recording front, the band have every intention of keeping other elements of their business organisation strictly within the family.

"Event Horizon is mostly concerned with making sure that Landscape works," explained Richard. "So for example even when we have a contract it will be retaining control of publicity and furthering what the record company does in that area. Or it could even rear its head again as a record label some time in the future — we don't know."

Hardly surprisingly, a few mistakes have been made. For example for a short while Event Horizon extended its agency side to arranging bookings for other bands, both on and off the same bill as Landscape. It brought in some money and little comfort.

"There was a stage," recalled John, "when we were approached by what seemed like every pub band in London, and on the whole I think we were pretty disappointed by their standards. If you don't believe in something it becomes depressing to carry on with."

"Some of them," added keyboard player Chris Heaton, "those that we did get work for, were subsequently very rude and offensive. Finally we told them to piss off."

"It's easy to laugh at what Chris says," concluded Richard, "but part of the thing about having your own company is that you can be surrounded by people that you like and the ambiance is good. We weren't going to all this trouble on behalf of other bands to then have them being difficult and nasty."

Landscape's enterprises have scarcely been confined to the business end. Their equipment and instrumentation has in itself

taken them away from most other bands — rock, pop, jazz, anything — into a class of their own. Perhaps it would be more truthful to say "their use of equipment". Anyone who has seen the band on stage won't readily forget the blistering display, sometimes of a virtually abstract quality, that comes from the keyboard department. It's achieved simply through skilful and inquisitive use of a Fender Rhodes 73 with a phaser, a ring modulator and a couple of other pedals. The products of the vast stacks of keyboards habitually on display at the Hammersmith Odeon can be pale by comparison.

"I've only just now become interested in synthesizers — polyphonic synthesizers," Chris admitted, "and partially that's because I'm essentially a piano player and interested in harmonies. Even if I had a monophonic synth now I think I'd be loathe to play solos on it.

"I've been trying out various instruments, but the Oberheim Sequential Circuit, the Prophet and the Yamaha CS80 seem to be the best of the polyphonics at the moment for different reasons. For instance the CS80 is the only one of the three which can be controlled by touch on the keyboard. That's quite useful for me because again as a piano player rather than an organ player I have, and value, the ability to control what I'm playing with my touch.

"There are other differences too. You need a memory with so many knobs; the Prophet has I think 16 while the Sequential Circuit has 40. But then it only does 5 notes while the CS80 does 8, so if you're interested in harmony there are only a certain amount of notes you can use.

"Then there's the question of changing the balance of the keyboard in volume. On the Prophet for instance if you want to play a melody and accompany yourself, they're both going at the same volume so you have to bugger about with the filters to get the upper end of the keyboard to ring out."

While Chris debates his final choice of keyboard synthesizer, he — like other members of the band — also sees certain inherent drawbacks to synthesizers as a whole at present for players where touch and phrasing are important assets.

"The problem with pitch-to-voltage," he summarised, "is that it needs a strong and even signal to control it. The whole idea of phrasing on an instrument is that the signal is changing constantly and therefore you won't get a good sound."

This is exactly the factor which has kept Jass player Andy Pask away from bass synths for the time being.

"If I play a note with a medium strength, Andy explained, "I get a fairly pure note. I use lightish gauge strings and if I then play harder and hit the frets, I'm then producing a very jagged sound and that really wouldn't come through on a synth. So it doesn't allow you that kind of dynamic control."

Fretless

Andy's current instruments are a Fender Precision fretless, used for about 40% of the time, and a fretted bass, used for the remaining 60%, custom-built by Roger Giffin after he'd failed to find anything to his liking in the shops. A fretless bass is on order from the same source: "The lorry-drivers' strike *has* affected us in that the ebony for the fingerboard is still in the docks..." Meanwhile, he has cast aside the pedal collection.

"I'm definitely going to try out a few more pedals, probably an echo unit and things of that sort rather than fuzz boxes," Andy continued, "but it's a constant search/struggle for me to find as good a bass sound as possible in as pure a form. Previously I'd been taking the pedals apart and changing the circuitry to try and minimise the effect they had on the normal bass sound."

Faced with the prospect of drum synthesizers, Richard has come to broadly similar conclusions — his working kit is a Pearl Dynafamily.

"I do want to go the same way as Chris and John," he noted, "into electronics. But there's not an electronic drum synth on the market that's usable for us, though the Syndrum is probably the most versatile. But again, like Chris, I've developed over the years a lot of techniques linked with touch control, touch dynamics — and you sound better if you use them. Drum synths are a bit of a toy at the moment because they only produce certain obvious sounds which everyone's heard. I might use them of course purely to get those sounds."

The biggest stride to date has been made by John, who now has on trial by arrangement with inventor Bill Barnardi and UK distributor Ray Kitchen, a Lyricon One, the sax synthesizer synonymous with Tom Scott. It's only fair to add that Landscape's reputation preceded them to the loan, and that the price tag is into four

figures.

"The keys work in the same way as a synthesizer keyboard," John explained, "this time using a modified Boehm fingering system. But you use your blowing technique to shape the note to give you your attack and duration, and there's also a reed control to control things like pitch and filtering. So there's a whole new range of expression in a form that isn't open to the keyboard player."

I think it's an amazing instrument, very versatile, very exciting to play. It's a completely new instrument as well, requiring a corresponding amount of practice and development similar to any other instrument. It's also an instrument of the future in the music that is going to best suit the Lyricon hasn't yet been written!

"I think there are some developments which could be added into the Lyricon One," he added, "simple things like having a radio mike so you don't have leads trailing round, and having a memory so you can change settings on stage. But all in all it's very exciting."

John hopes to be featuring, selectively, the Lyricon on stage shortly, and another convert may well prove to be Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson.

Worth adding as a sideline is that Landscape's two horns now have a new, linked amplification system in place of the previous separate guitar amps. Transducers and pre-amps, both by Barcus-Barry, had already liberated them from many problems (key noise for example) associated with using separate mikes and given a far greater parity with bass and keyboards.

"Pete and I," explained John, "now go into an NM 8 into 2 mixer with Gramplan reverb string for the sax and flutes and Hammond reverb spring for the trombone. Plus a Quad 405 current dumping amplifier and two Gauss speakers. It's a much cleaner sound all round, upgraded a hell of a lot in quality and it's much more compatible both with the PA that we're using and everyone else's gear."

It was Richard again who encapsulated Landscape's attitude towards the future of electronics in general, and their own, more immediate musical policy.

"You've got to create a vocabulary for these instruments. There's been so much music written for grand piano, for example, there are so many techniques for it, so many different people have added a little bit — each of these new instruments has got to be developed in the same way. Obviously the poly synths, for instance, are going to come together, there are going to be certain standard ingredients which will be deemed necessary, but that still hasn't settled down.

"I think the main thing we can say about Landscape's music is, you can't jump in at the deep end unless you want to do what's gone before, to emulate and imitate. If you want to reach people with something that's your own, original, and yet not talk over their heads, you've got to move step by step and find out about what they like and what they don't like. It's still important to us to play what we like, and we find common ground between us and the audience. And that's basically the result of playing so many live gigs."

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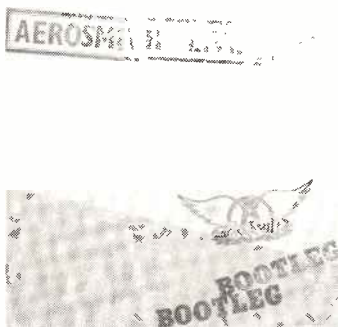
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Live braincrunch



**AEROSMITH
LIVE BOOTLEG
CBS 88325**

An enterprising way to lick the bootleggers — put out your own pseudo bootleg, complete with “Bootleg” stencilled on the sleeve (?). However, what a bootleg doesn’t offer is a proper fancy sleeve, full of details, and the official sound quality.

Aerosmith Live, a four sided chargrilled rock n’ rollburger, has all that and more, and confirms the band’s position as the most searing exponent of the heavy metal that has been flooding from the States of late in the shape of the

Kansases and the Bostons. Killers like this just make you realise all the more that trying to use words to describe the action is a waste of time. Tyler sings and screams, the riffs keep pounding out in an endless braincrunch, topped now and again with the hackneyed but stinging lead you’ve come to expect from the band.

The speciality, of course, is the Piledriver Break-neckspeed; Back In The Saddle and Toys In The Attic (described within as a folk song??) are the two main offenders in this category. The main dish is the Slower Heavyriff Dynamite: Sweet Emotion, Love Child with its insolent strut, Dream On are the main ones there. Along the way Lennon and McCartney’s classic Come Together goes through the leaden mangler.

The only respite, if fact, is the section at the start of the fourth side dug up from 1973, and the final piece of the bootleg joke. I Ain’t Got You is almost R&B and even has some gob-iron. Mother

Popcorn introduces a sax — the soft underbelly of the monster revealed, to say nothing of the fact that the band has more of a past than most people realise.

But you don’t need the words; as I said, I can’t really come across with them so you provide the cotton wool and the dandruff and make some up yourself.

C.S.

CHEAP TRICK LIVE AT THE BUDOKAN EPIC 86083

When I met Tom Peterson at a recent ethnic binge in a London Japanese restaurant to celebrate both the launch of this album and the band’s touring return to Britain he was chuckling loudly at having been voted the world’s best bass player in a Nipponese music paper. “Feels good to be ten times better than Chris Squire” he grinned. That little anecdote serves little purpose other than to illustrate candidly why this album has been released. Cheap Trick are very big news indeed in the land of the rising sun, raw welks and musical instruments.



Actually I share with Peterson and guitarist extraordinaire Rick Neilson a certain doubt about the wisdom of the record company’s decision to release this album on the rest of the world: Cheap Trick already have another studio album ready, mixed and packaged and don’t particularly want to saturate the more delicate markets quite yet. In addition to that, there was considerable pressure from the Japanese to record this and hence the band had little say in the

engineering etc., and had to return to the States with the takes and get Jack Douglas to try and mix them.

So, what is wrong with Live at Budokan? Not much, but then the Trick are an exciting band with lots of balls and guts to them, and a live album should have demonstrated their incredible stage energy — if not as well as Live and Dangerous did for Lizzy, then at least along those lines. As it is, the sound ain’t so hot, and the mix a little on the rough side, and the overall impression is one of OK, so what?

Track listing is Hello There, Come On Come On, Look Out, Big Eyes and Need Your Love on side one; Ain’t That A Shame, I Want You To Want Me, Surrender, Goodnight Now, Clock Strikes Ten — most of which are available on the band’s two previously released albums in this country, In Color and Heaven Tonight. High points are the superbly menacing and demanding ‘Need Your Love’ on which Rick plays some sparse but clean lead at great length, and the Fats Domino penned ‘Ain’t That A Shame.’ It’s all good clean rock n’ roll — ah shucks, some of it’s pretty hot and dirty as well — but it seems a shame that prospective punters may find they’ve shelled out the spondulics for this one only to find the new and hotly awaited studio album in the shops when the cupboard (or wallet) is bare. As Fats put it — “Ain’t That A Shame.”

T.S.

WALTER EGAN NOT SHY POLYDOR SUPER 2310 609

Mr. Egan is an early candidate for the ‘Hardest Promoted But To No Avail’ Award for 1979. The Polydor packaged Walter arrives in a resplendent bright red plastic folder complete not only with the usual biography and photographs and current product, but in this instance also with his previous album, plus, a recorded interview



with some American radio journalist. I've played both the albums, but in all honesty, cannot bring myself to sit through a whole LP length interview with a man who, musically at least, is saying very little indeed. I am to suppose that he may be more exciting verbally? Watch this space — maybe I'll find I should have reviewed the interview!

Still, Walter Egan may well have got himself a decent review had he not made the mistake of taking a live studio spot with the Old Grey Whatever It Is We'll Play It Test right at the very end of January. I mean, I'm a West Coastie, but Egan's performance was about as exciting as a mediocre episode of Crossroads, and as interesting as Stars on Sunday. There's not a lot wrong with being stuck in the sentiments of the Sixties — but there's ways of getting stuck!

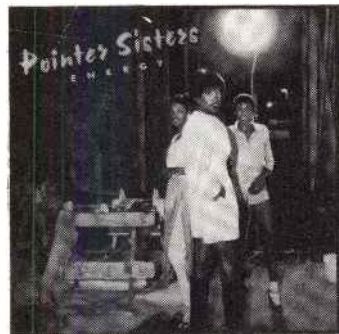
Not Shy is Egan's second album, and it sounds very similar to Fundamental Roll — but at least he didn't have the gall to call it Fundamental Rock. That would have hurt. The music is West Coast Country Rock so really I shouldn't have to describe it anymore, except I feel that this offering of blandness and banality needs some attention drawing to it, if only to warn others away on straighter paths.

There's not a song on the album that remains any more memorable than the click tracks in between: the utter inanity of lyrics concern the Blonde in The Blue T-Bird, and Finally Found a Girlfriend would be funny were it possible to laugh at the prospect of having to shell out real money for the privilege.

Perhaps my own knowledge of, and liking for, West Coast American music does give me sufficient credentials to slag off this record — and I make no secret that I know I'm slagging it off. It contains all the very worst aspects of San Francisco music: it reeks of insincerity, Egan's voice straining to get meaning and 'reality' out of lyrics which should have been left in the rhyming dictionary from which it sounds they came. The roll-over, lolling rhythms, the pseudo-meaningful breaks, choppy guitar, some of the most ordinary lead guitar playing I've heard in a decade — the whole package is bland and leaves a taste in the mouth that needs a sharp shot of iced-lime juice to cut through it.

The production is faultless — Lindsey Buckingham, super-multi-millionaire guitarist from Fleetwood Mac produced and engineered the album. Stevie Nicks, rock's most desirable speed-freak, contributes vocals and at least her voice manages to prise its way out of the sticky morass; Mick Fleetwood contributes some of the drumming, but the overall question is why in hell did they get mixed up with this kind of stuff? Rumours may not be everyone's cup of tea (but can x million people be wrong?) but it sure contains some fine playing, songs and feel — three entities sadly lacking in Walter Egan's Not Shy.

T.S.



**POINTER SISTERS
ENERGY
PLANET K 52107**

Black Echoes reacted with pleasure and surprise to this album from the queens of

soul. It isn't soul, they said. It's rock. Soul buffs beware. By the same token, that's precisely why a band not normally in Beat's province enters the album pages with a vengeance. When Bonnie Pointer left the group the remaining trio was written off as the less talented segment; instead of this being the case, they've simply turned round and taken their fine Soul voices into new territory with a wealth of material provided by bona fide rock persons.

Tunes by Becker and Fagen, Stephen Stills, Springsteen, Allen Toussaint, Bob Welch, Kenny Loggins and Jim Messina, Pat Simmons (Doobies — *someone* might not know), and Russ Ballard (even that's a good one) come pumping out one after the other, while the backing musicians line up as a rock sessions who's who as well; the Porcaros, Danny Kortchmar and Rick Jaeger for instance.

This trick of simply surrounding yourself with ace songs and musicians was recently pulled to good effect by Joe Cocker — the one difference is there's only one Joe and there are three Pointers. The actual flavour of their voices is still Soul, but Energy is pure Rock all the way.

The Stills and Loggins/Messina songs, As I Come Of Age and Angry Eyes, are totally characteristic of the writers' styles, so you can hear them in your head, right? True grit rock n' roll comes on side one: Lay It On The Line, with its ripe piano and neat guitar, Hypnotised gathering momentum and swelling before your very ears (that's by Welch), Come And Get Your Love with its snorting organ, with Dirty Work and Echoes Of Love (the Doobies of course) to mellow things out between times.

Add the Pointers to the songs and musicians, and all you need to top it off is a capable producer. Richard Perry did that job, so treat yourselves if you want a surprise.

C.S.

NATIONAL HEALTH OF QUEUES AND CURES CHARLY CRL 5010

Ah, hello, come in — shut the door behind you. Now what seems to be the trouble? Mmm? Ah. Oh I see. Well I'm glad you came straight to me — we like to put a stop to complaints like this as early as possible before they turn *really* nasty. Now if you wouldn't mind going behind the screen and ... ? Thankyou.

Jolly good. Now let's have a nice big aaaaaah. Mmmm. And again please. That's it. Now say ninety-nine. Oh dear. Oh dear yes, it *is* fortunate you made this appointment to see me. I'm getting some decidedly funny noises down the old stethoscope. For example, I can hear Dave Stewart on Keyboards, Phil Miller on guitar, John Greaves on bass and Pip Pyle on drums! No wonder your poor old chest is rattling. What's that? Well, this isn't all that common a disease. Only people who heard their last album are likely to be affected but that's rather unfair. Surely more people ought to get the chance at least to know what they're missing.

I mean, not since the silent demise of Caravan has there been such tasty organ grinding as Dave imparts to his old Hammond on Dreams Wide Awake, the last track on side one. Not since the disappearance of Hatfield And The North somewhere up the M1 motorway has a singer (in the latter case Robert Wyatt, in the present one, John Greaves) sung so cheerfully and tunelessly as on Binoculars. And never has this group National Health sounded so confident as on the opener The Collapso. Positively *Egg-like*, old boy.

But where were we? Oh yes, your chest! Have you suffered any kind of discharge? Nausea? Vomiting? Headaches? Actually Dave has just caused the band a headache by discharging himself from it, and back into the line-up that recorded Bill Bruford's



solo album. Tiresome — especially in the light of this album, which is better than their last. Still, underpaid I expect. You can't keep these youngsters — they all go into private practice. But it's sad, as I say. Things were coming along so well. Nice little touches like the birdsong at the beginning of The Bryden 2-Step, the overall extrovert approach ... never mind. The National Health may disappear, but medicine itself will carry on. Where there's a queue there's a cure.

Ask the next patient to come in, please.

P.D.

**SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY & THE ASBURY JUKES
HEARTS OF STONE
EPIC EPC 82994**

The most likeable band in the world and their third album — not a bad combination, even before one has eased vinyl from cardboard. The advance reports, on the basis of import copies, were almost over the top in their fulsome praise of the Jukes' latest effort, and on initial

listening one must nod in agreement. The band have matured at precisely the right speed, gradually leaving behind the stigma of "revivalists" and gaining their own individual musical identity.

In pursuit of this very real identity (in the sense that it is in no way contrived — it was only a matter of time before they stumbled upon it) they have produced a set of entirely original songs, penned by the talented — if that isn't too meagre a description — triumvirate of Johnny, Miami Steve Van Zandt and Bruce Springsteen. There are nine tracks: six by Van Zandt, two by Springsteen, including the title cut, and one by the three together.

What distinguishes this third platter from its predecessors is its aura of relaxation, a feeling that the songs are powerful enough melodically to succeed without histrionics. The band sound is beautifully essential to every cut. The entire album oozes that rare quality of timelessness, giving the listener the sensation that he always knew the songs, long before they were even written. In particular I'm thinking of Trapped Again on Side Two and the majestic, assured closer Light Don't Shine.

But hold on one second right here — you are perhaps thinking that the Jukes have been absorbed and made as bland as the Bee Gees by too

much studio technique. Not so, my friends, for there is plenty to shake a tail feather to, not least the opening track Got To Be A Better Way Home. If there's any regret, it's the loss of precisely those rough edges, the slightly sharpened brass section squalling after a high note, Johnny himself straining his voice to a croak.

Those were the endearing features of the first two albums, and the band is now too good for imperfections of that sort. A shame, in a way, but live I'm sure they still cook like an egg on a hot pavement. With songs like this, I can't wait for their next visit.

P.D.

**NEIL ARDLEY
THE HARMONY OF
THE SPHERES
TXS R 133**

If one is entitled to listen to

music, and view from an objective standpoint one's own reactions to the aspirations of its composer while ignoring that same composer's context for writing the music, then this offering from Neil Ardley can be reviewed harmoniously.

If, however, because of the pretensions of the concept, one is forced first to take issue with the idea before considering the music, one's approach to that music can be severely affected by one's reactions to the governing precept. I had difficulty, for example, in relating Gordon Giltrap's Visionary album to the works of William Blake — which it was supposed, by its composer, to illustrate and musically represent.

On the same level but in a totally different plane, Neil Ardley has contrived to compose this collection of themes having first made a

(H)ELP

**EMERSON LAKE & PALMER
LOVE BEACH
ATLANTIC K50552**



"Emerson Lake & Palmer have made a new album."

"Que?"

"Emerson Lake & Palmer have made a new album."

"I thought they were dead."

"No, I don't think so."

"The way I heard it, they hit it big when three-pieces and electronics were all the rage, made Tarkus and Trilogy, became far too rich and flopped off into a retirement that made Led Zeppelin look like busy giggers by comparison."

"I wouldn't have put it quite like that."

"How would you have put it?"

"Well, when you're successful you know you can just churn out the same old stuff: the only problems you might encounter are that a) you'll do it with less conviction as you get older and b) times change so it

might all seem a little passé anyway."

"Passé — oh very nice."

"Instead of being abusive, why don't you give it a fair hearing? Just listen to it and pretend you don't know who made it."

"Right mate, you're on."

"Open the window before you start."

"It's called Love Beach, it was made in the Bahamas."

"Can you open the other window?"

"It's a big wimperooonee — so called 'laid-back'; a few sappy songs; a couple of classical jerk ..."

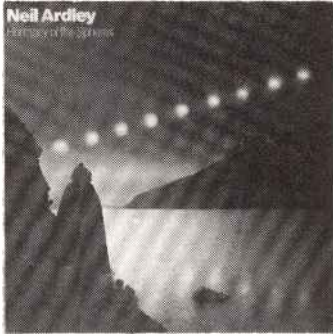
"Watch the language."

"Classical self-abuse."

"OK — turn it off. And shut the windows, it's freezing in here."

B.O.





non-musical assumption, and then related it to musical notation. I find the kind of accompanying sleeve notes and biography something of an intrusion: is it really significant that, and I quote, "Neil *simply* (my italics) timed how long it took the planets to orbit the sun and then he converted the times into nine different notes. The frequencies of the notes were in the same proportions as the times of the orbits — and this gave him a nine note chord, Inter stinky this exactly covers the complete range of human hearing and so this chord can only be produced on synthesisers as it extends beyond the range of acoustic instruments."

Similarly, "This new album from Neil Ardley is based on the ancient Greek idea of the harmony of the spheres — a celestial music given out by the planets as they float through space. The Greeks believed that the planets emit musical notes related to their orbits and Ardley has found out what this harmony sounds like." I don't mean, for one moment, to denigrate Ardley's sincerity. I merely pose the question, is it relevant to anyone else but him?

Anyway, that all said, what about ardley and his album? Well, it is an interesting and hypnotic musical exercise — strongly jazz influenced, but with more form than is apparent in the offerings of the more established jazz-rock genre. Neil has a long association with jazz himself, having worked closely with the likes of Jon Hiseman, Barbara Thompson (who is featured

on this album) and other members of the New Jazz Orchestra in the mid Sixties including Jack Bruce. His previous works include the highly acclaimed Kaleidoscope of Rainbows and I sincerely hope that Harmony of the Spheres will be as well received. The overall feel of the record is one of subtle completeness, with themes played and built on by alternate instruments at times even inverting the theme — with the real joy of hearing the electric side of John Martyn — one of my favourite acoustic players. John's ethereal acoustic sound translates brilliantly into the electric format — ok, so he's going electric himself anyway — and it must have been pure inspiration on Ardley's part to acquire Martyn's services on this album.

The musicianship is exemplory — in particular I would like to hail the bass playing of half-Maori Billy Kristian. Would be bass players should take time out to listen to this man's technique: both funky and tight, and then again rhythmic, and again expressive, he seems to extract more subtlety from what many would regard as a dogmatically restrictive instrument than I've heard many piano players dig out of arguably the most expressive instrument available. I don't know how much freedom Billy had, or how restricted he was by Ardley's original score — but the end result is a tribute both the composer's understanding of the bass guitar, and Kristian's ability to interpret it.

I've no idea whatsoever if Harmony of the Spheres succeeds in this nine note chord idea, nor do I give two halfpence worth of bullshit whether Jupiter orbits slightly below D flat and Pluto at F sharp. To relate that sort of knowledge to my animal liking of the music — complex, yet refreshing familiar, — would spoil my enjoyment and surely, enjoyment is the ultimate demand of the composer —? Ardley's own synthesiser

playing stands head high not on his technical keyboard technique, but rather in an uncanny ability to find the right sounds for the right passage.

In all then, a fine and interesting album, intellectually demanding at times, but highly enjoyable all the same. I really wonder at the wisdom of the spaciness of the concept of the sleeve notes: ". . . in keeping with their desire to see beauty and order in all things, it followed that these orbits would lie at such distances one from another that a perfect harmony must resound throughout the heavens." Surely, and correct me if I'm wrong Neil, you're gonna frighten off a whole pile of casual browsers by that sort of stuff. You may think it's important, but I would think it far more important that a wider audience should become involved in this album rather than be frightened off by intellectual musical elitism.

T.S.

SHORT CUTS

KEITH JARRETT
BEST OF KEITH JARRETT
ABC IMPL 8054

Quality cuts from a quality artist, with selections from '73 to '78. Dreamy jazz piano all the way, with a few extras when the band take a hand as well. Sax is the main side dish, with guitar on Treasure Island.

PIERRE MOERLEN'S GONG
DOWNWIND
ARISTA SPART 1080

Sensible rock; steady, listenable rhythms, unconventional (of course) leads on the basis of Pierre's excellent drumming. Mike Oldfield is one of the guests, so there's one bit of Tubular Bells soundalike. Look out also for a quick appearance by Mick Taylor on What You Know. Recommended.

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TRADE NEWS

NEW ARIA DRUMS

Gigsville are moving into the percussion market with a five drum Aria kit with heavy duty stands retailing at £475 inc. VAT. The shells of the drums are of 9-ply laminated construction. Sizes are: bass drum, 22" x 16"; tom toms, 12" x 8" and 13" x 9"; floor tom tom, 16" x 16"; metal snare drum, 14" x 5½". Reme Ambassador heads are fitted as standard and the colour options are; silver, metallic maroon, metallic copper and metallic brown.



CHANGING FACES

Eddie Haynes, Premier's Promotions Manager for five years, has started the New Year as Marketing and Promotions Manager with Avedis Zildjian. Based in the UK, he will be responsible to Percussion SA Switzerland for Zildjian marketing and promotions in Europe and other export markets.

Sonor have appointed Gordon Williamson to the post of Marketing Director. For the past three years he was worked closely with Sonor and the London-based part of the Hohner operation, as Marketing Consultant and lecturer. Increased sales have allowed the creation of this post, and a total marketing concept is now en-

visaged to support Sonor percussionists, Sonor distributors and Sonor Key Dealers worldwide.

Ivor Arbiter has announced the appointment of Martin Fredman as UK Sales Director of the CBS/Arbiter group. Other moves in the camp include Mark Goodwin setting up Paiste Sound Centres, concentrating also on Rogers percussion and stands together with the Autotune drum range. Malcolm Hamilton has just joined the company with special responsibilities for selling Vox products in the North; salesman Trevor Cash will be devoting some of his time to the same task in the South.

Gigsville report that the first consignment of kits is sold out, and that they are hoping to add

a new six-drum Super Aria kit to the reinforcements of this model.

BLACK BOX REVERB

Eurotec have recently added the Black Box reverb unit to their line of products. The unit has two channels — guitar and microphone — with three level controls and one reverb control. Housed in a rugged metal case,

the unit is priced at £45.

Their new Colorsound transducer pickup boasts a "loaded transmission line" response shaper — meaning, according to Eurotec, more gain, less equalisation and less feedback.



▲ Eurotec Black Box and ▼ Colorsound transducer pickup



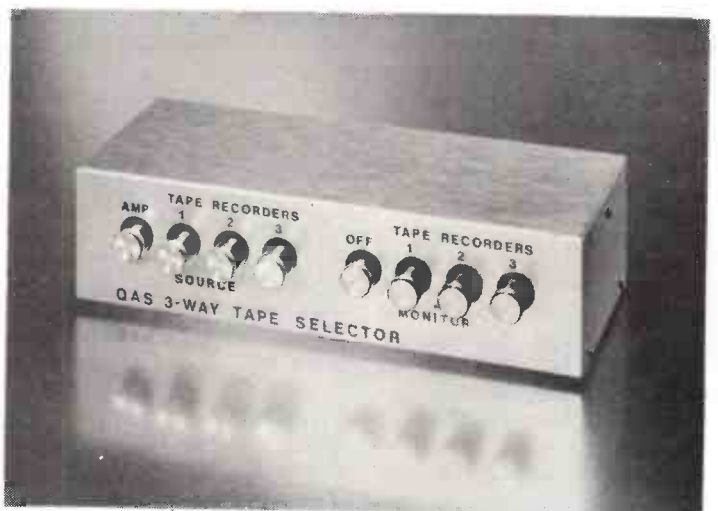
QAS INTRODUCE 3-WAY TAPE SELECTOR

The QAS division of the Ariel group of companies has introduced a new 3-way tape selector allowing one amplifier and three tape recorders to be connected simultaneously and operated in various combinations. The selector is fitted with 5-pin DIN sockets wired to DIN standards.

The full range of facilities is: amplifier to three recorders to record only; amplifier to 1, 2 or 3

recorders to record and playback: playback from one recorder and record on 2; playback on 1 recorder monitored by the amplifier while recording on 2 recorders; playback from 1 recorder whilst monitoring the recording made on either of the others.

Trade enquiries to QAS, Wollaton Road, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2PB; tel. 0602 256141.



WOULD YOU CREDIT IT?

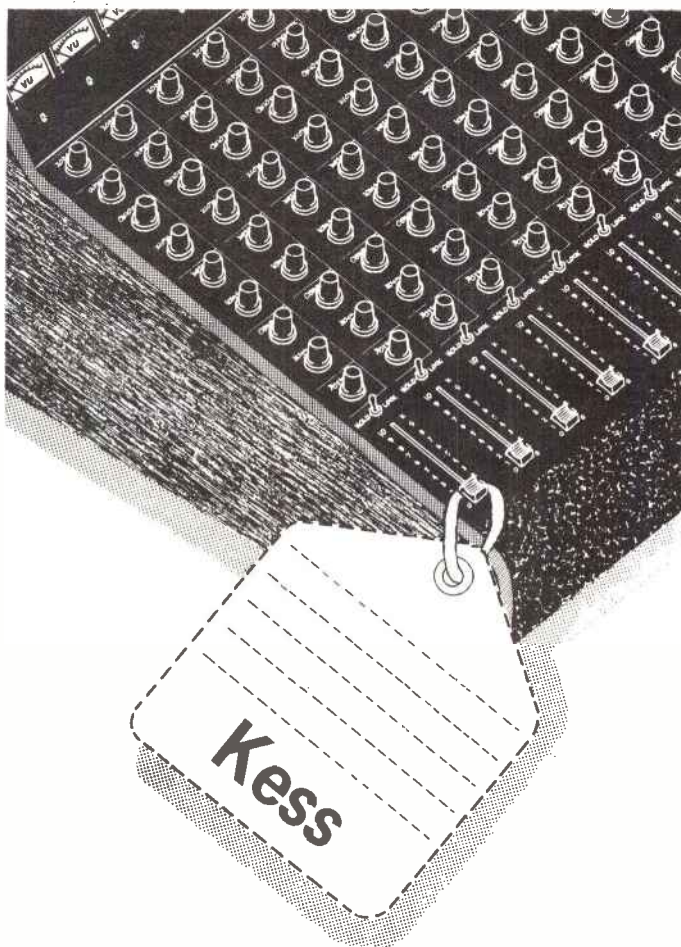
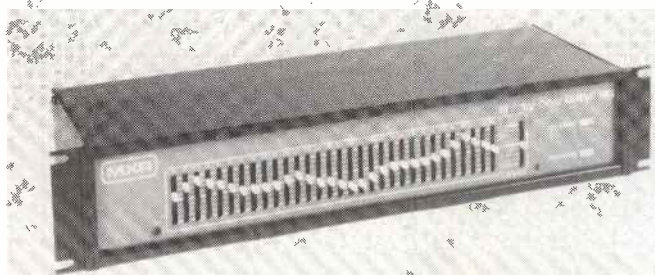
What is believed to be the first credit card scheme to be introduced by a major British retail network specialising in hi-fi and home entertainment has been launched by Lasky's, a member of the Audiotronic Group. Chairman, Mr. Geoffrey Rose, stated: "The new credit card scheme is designed to

encourage the lay customer — who tends to be wary of the high cost "new technology" which typifies many modern hi-fi products — to invest in good quality audio equipment." Order by telephone and direct mail and is also valid for special offer items and sales goods. Full details of the scheme are available from any branch.

R.S.E.S. TO STOCK MXR

Studio Equipment Services have recently concluded an agreement with Atlantex Music, to be the main stockist for the MXR product range. S.E.S. have also taken the complete

range of Neal audio visual and studio cassette recorders into stock, as well as Sescam who manufacture DI boxes, distribution boxes, splitters and the like.



BUZZ MUSIC

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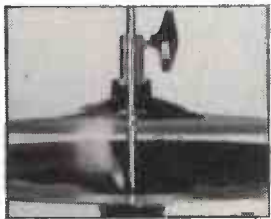
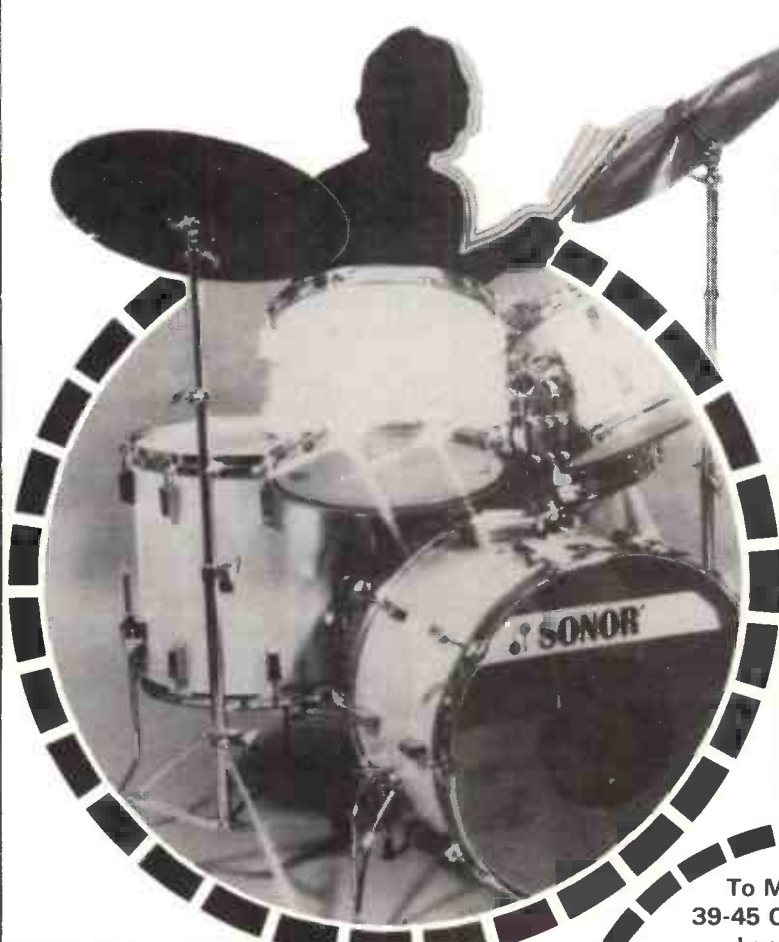


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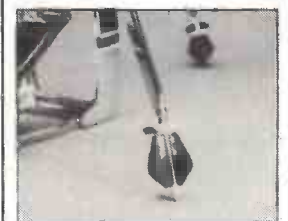
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B1/3/79

FRANKFURT FAIR PREVIEW

Part Two

Inevitably, the Christmas post and post-Christmas revelries caused delays, and we were reluctantly forced to omit a very few important exhibitors from our 'full' preview of the Frankfurt Fair in our February issue: in other words, it was only a 'nearly full' Preview! So here, we're happy to allocate a little more space to complete the picture of the year's most important musical instruments industry exhibition, and to ask you to watch out for our review of the event and our in-depth examination of the more important innovations to be launched in Frankfurt.

ROSE-MORRIS

Underneath the Rose-Morris umbrella we're looking forward to Marshall's biggest

ever Frankfurt Fair new product launches. In addition to the two combos launched earlier in '78, Mar-

shall will be exhibiting six — yes, 6 — completely new products on the R-M stand.

These are : a 4 × 10 reverb Super, 100 watt Valve; a 4 × 10 Compressor Bass, 100 watt valve; a 2 × 12 reverb Master Volume 30 watt Transistor; 2 × 12 reverb Master Volume 50 watt Valve (all combos); a 200 watt reverb PA with 100 watt monitor and a 100 watt reverb Valve amp top. Marshall will have a sound-proof coco booth on the stand for private demonstrations of the new amplifiers.

Also new on the R-M stand are developments in the Clansman drum ranges, as well as the (wait for it) James Galway Tin Whistle (quite a long way away from his highly acclaimed gold flute!)

All products on display on the R-M stand are of British design development and manufacture, and Peter Clarke will be leading the flag waving team comprising of Derek Baxter, Keith Drewitt, Jim Wilmer, Alan Genders, Vince Hill, Terry Hall and John Adams.

SOUNDOUT LABORATORIES

Soundout will be found on stand number 50260 in the British sector and will be using the event to make the Frankfurt launch of the new range of FRUNT band equipment including guitar

and keyboard amplification, PA amplification, PA mixers and a range of complementary speaker cabinets.

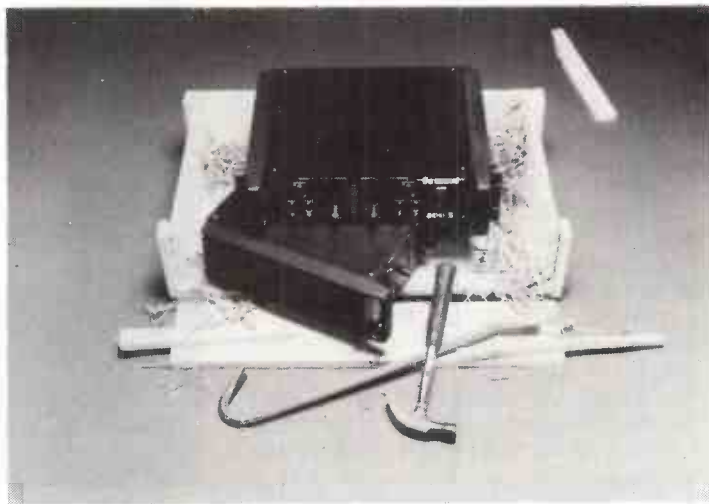
Soundout will also be demonstrating a large selection of their highly successful range of disco equipment, and Todd Wells, John Carroll and Dave Street will all be in attendance.

SHARMA MANUFACTURING

We've been informed that Sharma intend unveiling at least three new items at this year's Fair. In addition to the very successful range of single channel cabinets, Sharma have developed a series of multi-channel cabs for both home and professional use.

The cabs have been designed to interface with the latest organ models with nine and eleven pin external outlets, and need only the single Sharma multicore connector.

Sharma also intend showing a new cabinet designed for the phaser type of organ which do not readily lend themselves to rotary cabinets: Sharma's new baby is intended to allow the user to both amplify and enhance these tricky phaser effect. Keith Hitchcock will be there in person along with a full complement of Sharma personnel, and he extends a belated but friendly welcome to all visitors.



NAMM SHOW '79

A report on America's leading trade exhibition, held in January at the Disneyland Convention Centre, Los Angeles

England was in sub zero temperatures under snow and strike bound. Los Angeles was sunny and warm and Disneyland was full of happy visitors enjoying a winter break. The Disneyland hotel is by the entrance to the park and is three large multistorey blocks with attendant halls and reception rooms. The exhibition was held in four large assembly rooms with fringe exhibits in the ground floors of the main hotel buildings.

This is the exhibition of the National Association of Music Merchants winter market. The summer exhibition is much bigger and usually held in either Chicago or Atlanta. All the major US manufacturers were there and importers of foreign equipment. The show, only lasts for three days and so the 240 stands were very well attended.

The American music industry is very much bigger than the British because of various factors but especially there are more venues for musicians to play in. There is a higher standard of living generally and the music shops do not mind investing in large stocks. It is possible therefore for large companies to be built up solely on the home trade. I spoke to one large manufacturer who was very proud that his company had nearly achieved 30% export. Successful UK companies are at least 50% export and many are above 75% because of the reverse to the American situation. The net results is that a terrific amount of equipment is shown,

of which probably less than 5% is seen here in the UK. It would be pointless for me to reel off names of equipment that will never reach our shores and so I have decided only to write on products that may find their way here (eventually) with things of special interest and new products of UK origin.

The American Synthesizer industry is probably the most inventive and as a result of the computer and space industries engineers will endeavor to synthesize everything (including food, uygghh'). Polyphonic keyboard synths have been with us a while now and of course they were all on show. In a few years they will get the price down and the reliability up. When this happens I am sure sales will increase. Guitar synths are newer animals but I'm sure there is a resistance by musicians to these expensive gadgets. They would much rather buy one effect at a time and know where they are. Time will of course change all this.

Drum synths have only come into their own in the last year or so being featured on several hit singles. Unlike the other musicians in the band the drummer has been stuck with the same basic tools for years so when something really different comes along he gets excited. There are two major companies in the US, Synare and Syndrum. Synare seem to go for playing different tuned pads like a synthesized

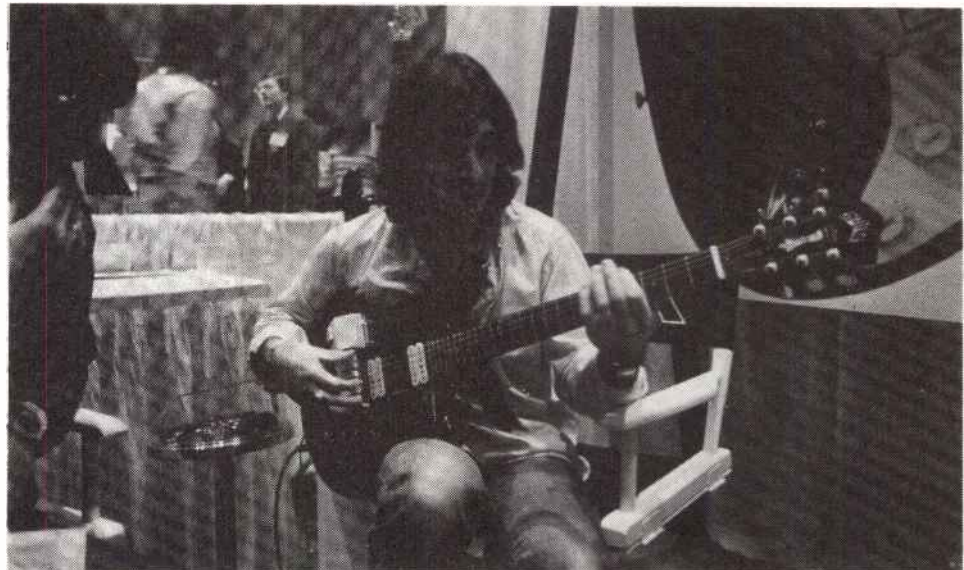
xylophone with memory and instant recall, while Syndrum tend to keep to percussive sounds. I prefer the latter. The latest addition to the Syndrum range is a compact drum which could sell for just over £100 each. More complex models are available for about £300 each. A sidenote here is that percussive sounds break loudspeakers and so drummers may eventually have more amplification that anyone else in the band.

Square

The latest Synth is the Steiner "Electronic Valve Instrument" Synthesizer. Now the trumpet and tuba people can see what they can do. This is a square tube about 25 cm long with three keys in the centre. At one end is a hole for blowing through and at the other a circular switch. No mouth piece is needed as the circular switch is rotated to give the register whilst the keys are pressed to give the note. Very exciting.

Of course several guitar amps were on show, nothing really new. Marshall were showing their new combo and HiWatt featured a new small combo/practice amp.

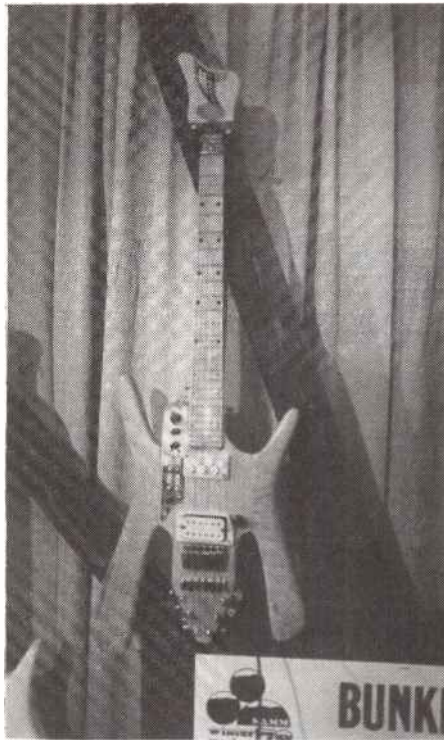
For years Fender and Gibson had the monopoly on solid bodied guitars but now small firms are beginning to produce well made beautifully designed almost sculptures rather than guitars. The Bunker guitar looks good and is unique in that the machine heads are at the base of the guitar instead of on the neck. Other well designed guitars were exhibited by B.C. Rich. There is a growing trade in accessories for guitars and two companies seem to lead the field supplying scratch plates, machine



Lol Creme in his jeans (and exhibiting his Gizmo).



Nickelodean "who needs musicians"



The Bunker guitar



Mr. Chapman with stick

heads, bridges, knobs and things, a sort of custom guitar kit. The modified guitars look very good indeed with say all brass fittings supplied by Mighty Mite or Schecter.

Several effects boxes are now on the market. First there was MXR, then Morley then Electro Harmonix and lately Ross and now Dod. There must be a limit to the amount of these effects on the market since the electronics and effects offered are more or less the same. Perhaps presentation will win the day and for my money Morley was the best turned out with Dod cosmetics a close second.

Consoles

Teac had their 16 track, 90/16 tape machine, console model on 1" tape on show. Presentation is professional but the design is old fashioned. Multitrack machines looked like this 10 years ago, of course by the time anyone sees one of these in the UK we'll all probably be another 10 years older anyway.

Several mixing consoles were on show, and for once here is a little success story for England. Our mixers look and perform better than anyone else's at a competitive price. RSD/Studiomaster had an impressive display showing several models and introducing a new 20/8 monitor mixer. Canary showed several models including a new 24/2 Mixer with a surprisingly low price tag. Soundcraft had the new 16/2 present. Several new

features are included and it's housed in a flight case. Gelf showed a 16/8 monitor mixer featuring graphics on all 8 outputs. Well done the British contingent but where were HH and MM?

Cone

Other mixers were shown by all the American manufacturers, the most impressive was Road with a sensible price and nice features. Yamaha seem to go in their own direction and showed the PM2000 36 Channel mixer with an unbelievable price tag. I find it hard to take their products seriously although they are obviously trying hard. The new Yamaha loudspeakers were also on show. The Cone 15" were of conventional design and the pressure drivers looked remarkably like the JBL models.

Stick

In a market as big as the USA's it's possible for people's widest ideas with a little success to stay alive where in the UK they would fall at the first fence. Mr. Emmett Chapman invented an instrument called the "Stick" and to my knowledge for the last five years or so has been selling his idea. The stick is like a broadened guitar neck without a body and it has both bass and guitar strings and a pick up. By pressing the strings on to the frets it's possible to play melody, bass and chords all at the

same time. Mr. Chapman plays the instrument marvellously but I'm still waiting to see the instrument credited on an album sleeve. I wish him every success, it must be difficult to pioneer an instrument. We've all been waiting a long time to see the Gizmo but there it was with its inventors Lol Creme and Kevin Godley. Of course Lol Creme is the only person who can play it and his solo demonstrations were quite impressive. It works by rotating wheels which can be pressed onto the string individually or in groups. The sound is rather like a string quartet playing with dentists drills. The unit looked too expensive ever to become really popular but good luck anyway to these two English pioneers.

Horizon

I hope all the exhibitors had a successful show as the business men felt that storm clouds were on the horizon in the shape of a trade recession. Of course if the US home trade falls off we can expect that manufacturers will look abroad for their markets and we will see more American products here.

Developments

Storm clouds were on my horizon too as I flew back into London to be greeted once again by cold and snow. I look forward to being in Atlanta, Georgia in June to see further developments.

PROFILE

LOGAN ELECTRONICS

Here's Logan at you, kid

Everyone these days seems to be intent on bending your ear about the amazing instrument output of Japan, but have you ever noticed how much gear comes from Italy on the quiet? One Italian company which has risen to great things, via turning out one model that has become an industry standard, is Logan Electronics. That model, of course, is the String Melody, marketed in this country at the time with great success by Hornby Skewes.

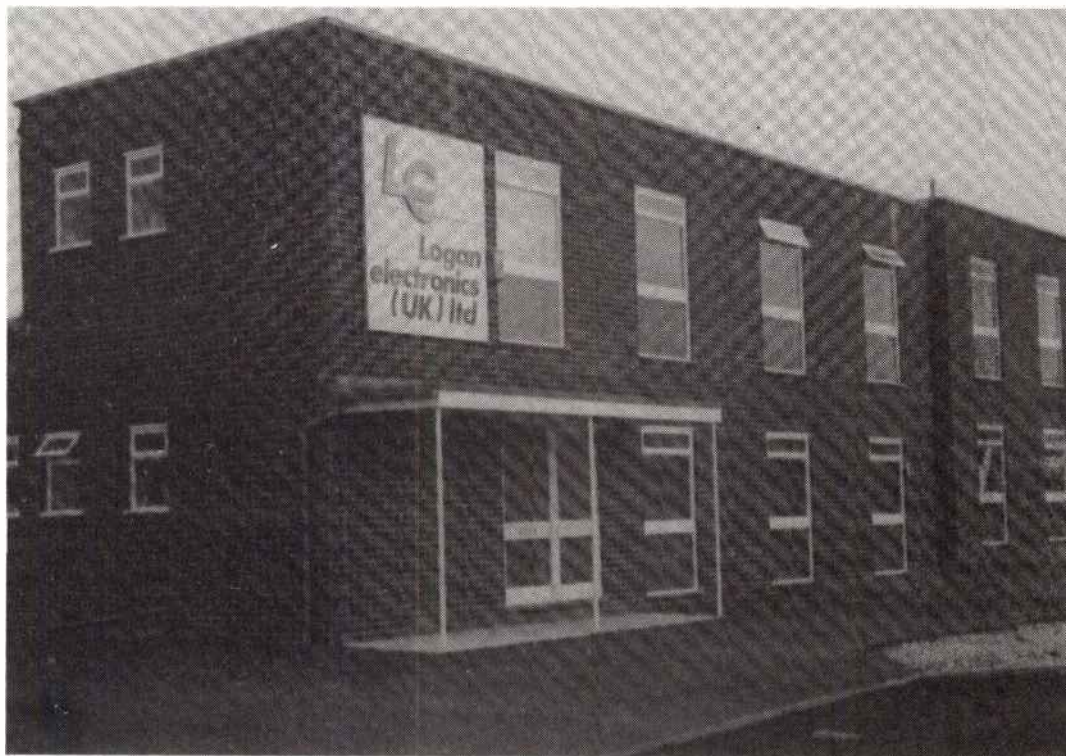
Logan began in the true free enterprise style ten years ago, when Lio Polverini returned from some four years in the United States to form Gisgo, a company aimed at distributing general musical merchandise. In the early 70s he met Carmelo Castornia who at that time was working for another large Italian electronic organ company. Here was a man full of enthusiasm and sound experience from the music industry, eager to set up and establish a company for the purpose of manufacturing not 'just another' range of home and entertainment organs, but products which could offer far more appeal in sound and quality than had been produced by many other manufacturers.

Specialists

Both Lido and Carmelo were forward thinking enough to appreciate the wealth of experience they could offer each other — Lido Polverini with, by now, world wide contacts in the music business and Carmelo Castornia with an inexhaustible fund of get-up-and-go. Together they formed Logan Electronics, the name being taken from the words 'logic' and 'analogue'.

The site they took up was just outside the small Adriatic town of Portorecanati — south of Ancona — on 120,000 square metres of land. The pair

remained with a handful of employees producing a range of home organs which gradually grew in popularity until, inevitably, the 'breakthrough' product was created. It was 1973 and Carmelo, with his specialist team of designers and technical staff, had come up



with a product which was to be the forerunner of the current Logan range — the String Melody. This model reproduced string orchestral voices, and although other companies had already come up with similar machines, the Logan made a noticeable incision in this area of the market.

The String Melody has been upgraded in specification more recently whilst at the same time an entirely new instrument, the String Orchestra, was introduced. This instrument features not only orchestral

violins, but also several new effects of independent solo brass instruments, 'slalom' control and glide effects. It is quickly becoming an attractive add-on keyboard both for home organ buyers as well as professional musicians.

At the 1978 Spring Frankfurt Fair Logan launched the Caravelle Collection, a new range of home and professional organs. The dealer response was, to use Logan's own word "astronomical" and to such a degree that after many approaches from members of the British retailers and distributors Logan decided to go it alone in Britain, although they had previously been manufacturing certain product lines for two well known American organ distributors in the UK.

The Caravelle range comprises three console models and a portable, running from £990 to £1990 retail. Besides the normal specifications the Caravelle 600

many, Japan, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Taiwan, Thailand, Australia, Malaysia, Israel, Canada and the USA to name a handful. Logan and Gisgo now employ some 200 staff of whom 70 produce over 250 Logan organs every week.

Experience

Logan Electronics (UK) Ltd. is based in New Milton, Hampshire and has now been trading since mid-July, 1978. Heading the UK operation is John M. Edgar, with fifteen years experience in the marketing of electronic organs. Around thirty dealers have already been appointed in various parts of the country, many of whom are now firmly establishing Logan products in their areas and a few of whom will be starting with Logan as this new year gets underway.

John points out that the company's aim is to set up dealers

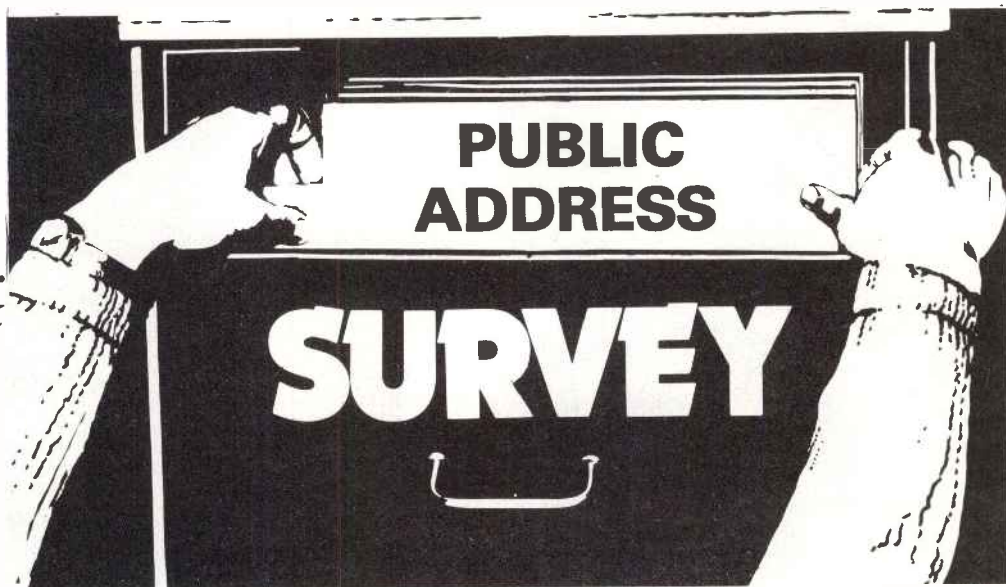
Deluxe (£1550), the Caravelle T249 Portable (£1490) and the Caravelle Special (£1990) is the String Melody circuitry with piano features, polyphonic synthesis plus a rhythm and automatic accompaniment section with rippling arpeggio effects. Even the smallest home organs retailing from £480 include 2 x 44 note keyboards, at least three footages on solo plus manual and pedal sustain, auto rhythms etc. and keyboard fall.

The company now distributes its products to over 30 countries worldwide including Italy, Ger-

who not only have confidence in the potential of the Logan organ range, but who also have room in their programme to give reasonable concentration to the local marketing of the products.

"These dealers who are already working with Logan have confirmed that the reliability of the organs, and the technical and promotional service behind them, is second to none", says John. "That is the way we intend to operate as the company continues to grow and gains the respect of the industry"

P.A. can be the biggest hassle and largest expense that any band has to face. Here we take a quick buyer's guide through some of the more important products on offer



AKG

Manufacturers of a wide range of professional and semi-professional audio equipment from headphones to hifi cartridges (good ones as well... Ed!), AKG supply the input to the PA system through their superb range of condenser and dynamic microphones, and then add the depth through one of their two portable reverberation units.

AKG reverb units are almost compulsory purchases for any studio with professional pretensions, but it's perhaps less known that the company apply their sophisticated techniques to live usage equipment. The BX15 is a new compact pro reverb unit designed for all general purpose operations where small size, portability, robustness and ease of handling are demanded. The BX10 is the less sophisticated version, featuring decay time adjustment in three steps only and continuous bass and treble control for each channel.

ALLEN AND HEATH

Allen and Heath's SR mixers are fully modular consoles featuring up to 28 inputs and 8 subgroups. Peak reading LED meters are standard as are multipin connector and transformer balanced mic inputs. A flight case is available complete with multicores and stageboxes if required. Their SD12-2 warrants special attention in the crowded field of 12 into 2 mixers. It is primarily used for recording, as are all A&H mixers; and their models accordingly concentrate on output and monitoring facilities for this purpose. The SR series should be

extended to 40 input 8 group models in the future.

BUZZ MUSIC

Buzz Music produce a range of speaker enclosures, flight cases, transit cases, amp racks, multicores, stage boxes, DI boxes etc., a free 26 page catalogue is available on request. Additionally, they are agents for other PA and backline manufacturers and supply complete PA rigs and components from stock.

CANARY MIXING DESKS LTD.

Canary are manufacturers of amps, crossovers, graphics, etc., but are perhaps best known for their mixing desks, and rightly so. The 12/2 has been designed as a second-generation, medium price desk to complement the already hugely successful 10/2 and 16/2. The 12" has been designed primarily for use in a live PA application, and the desk has its own built-in power supply.

Canary say the new desk offers the maximum flexibility at an economical price in compact form. The tec-spec is excellent and there's been special emphasis placed on reducing noise and distortion. Canary's most recent development is the interesting 24" 2 console which sells at the amazing price of less than eleven hundred pounds. More info and equipment can be had from Canary's distributor, Mick Johnson Music in Putney.

CARLSBRO

Carlsbro Country (actually

somewhere not too far from Nottingham) is homeland for a number of interesting and high quality p.a. equipment. The company has long held a reputation for competitive pricing coupled with reliable performance. The Marlin PA amp is a versatile unit with switchable reverb on all four input channels, and two high impedance inputs per channels. Power rating is 130 watts RMS at less than 0.05%.

The Carlsbro Constellation is a 12 channel stereo mixing desk (again very reasonably priced) with hi/lo impedance balanced line input, gain, 3 channel feedback, auxiliary send, stereo pan controls and slide fade plus an overload peak programme LED indicator in each channel. Also from Carlsbro comes an excellent range of speaker cabs — full range flare mini bins, bass bins, plus a selection of multi purpose cabs as well. Carlsbro also produce monitor cabs and monitor extension speakers, slave amplifiers and a reverb unit fitted with the ubiquitous Hammond spring reverb unit.

J. T. COPPOCK

J. T. Coppock are currently handling Randall PA equipment. Among their units are the RPA 300 8-channel mixer amp, 200 watts into 4 ohms, with variable monitor gain output, the RPA 120 6-channel mixer amp, 120 watts into 4 ohms with two jack inputs per channel and high/low impedance switching, and RSC 6 columns, for use with either of the others. These use 2 x 12" and 2 x 10" speakers and two Piezo tweeters. The RPA 300 and RPA 120 mixer

amps used in conjunction with the columns would be suitable as a PA system for the small to medium sized band.

GIBSON-BRITAIN

Gibson-Britain, based in Store Street, London WC1, sell and install all makes of P.A. and related equipment, and also specialise in custom designed and built systems to order, for many applications. G-B also concentrate on audio service work, and manufacture a small, high-quality practice amplifier for use with high performance headphones. Future plans include manufacture of a 'Multi' practice amp with several inputs and outputs, as well as a power-amp. Gibson-Britain are also appointed Service Agents for H/H and inform us they carry a large range of H/H spares in stock.

STEVE GRAHAM AUDIO/STAGE-LINE-SYSTEMS

Steve Graham Audio of New Barnet are manufacturers of multi-core cables, stage and D.I. boxes. They have recently introduced a new modular system which enables you to buy each part (cable, stage-box, adaptor etc.) separately. Steve Graham make stage boxes with 2-pole jacks for MM, and with three pole jacks for Canary and HH among others, and with XLR connectors for most of the higher grade desks. They stock cable reels, off-the-shelf microphone and speaker cables, and stereo guitar cables. The company claims their multi-pair cable is the cheapest in Europe, and say "If it moves signals or electric from A to B we've got it."

JBL

JBL's name is almost synonymous with high quality loudspeaker cabinets, although it crops up rather more often in our regular studio spotlight features: (glance, for example, at this month's studio and check out the monitoring system!) JBL are, however, no newcomers to the professional PA scene having been involved in the manufacture of high quality sound reinforcement systems for some 30 years.

JBL produce not only the completed cabinet — some in extremely attractive designs, but also the all-important drivers, horns, and lens assemblies. JBL are also involved in the manufacture of Electronic Frequency Dividing Networks (crossovers to you) and power amplifiers.



HH ELECTRONICS

HH, as well as being arguably the most successful manufacturer of instrument amplification in Europe, also handle the complete spectrum of PA equipment — mixers, monitors, speaker systems, whole PA set-ups, power amplifiers, Concert PA systems, and digital effects units!

Ignoring the power of all that, we'll concentrate on a particular favourite, the SM200 watt stereo mixer amplifier — a highly portable, versatile, rugged and by all accounts reliable six channel mixer/amplifier complete with a seven band graphic equaliser, and built-in reverb. Each

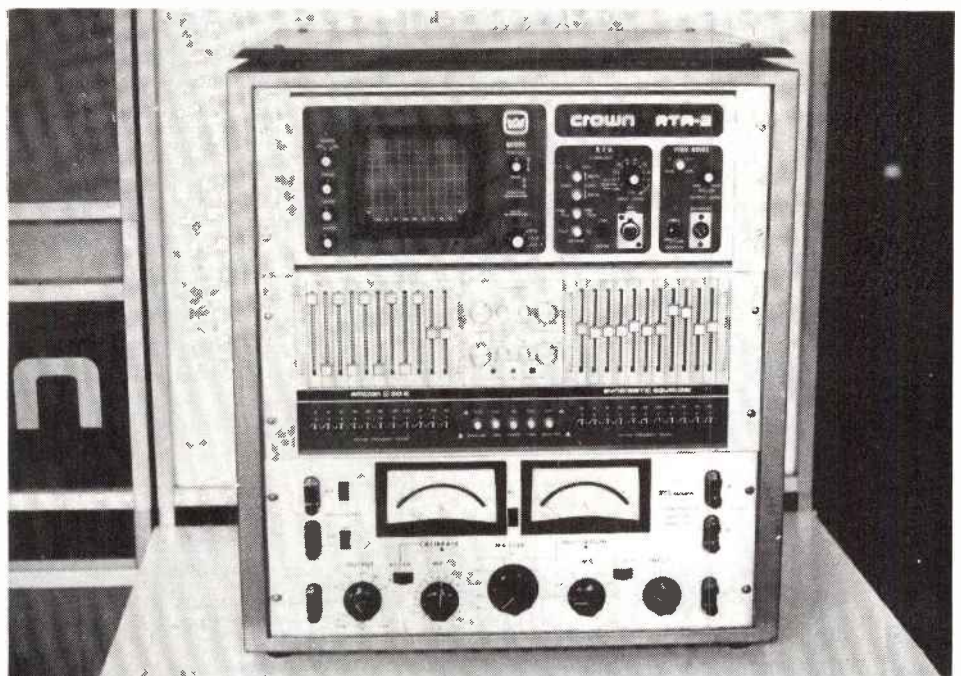
channel features volume, bass, treble, reverb/echo, stereo pan, and a three way monitor switch.

HH also market a 'mixer stand' which puts the SM200 in the right place at the right time. HH can supply complete systems incorporating their recently introduced speaker range recognised by those incredibly hardwearing protective mouldings.

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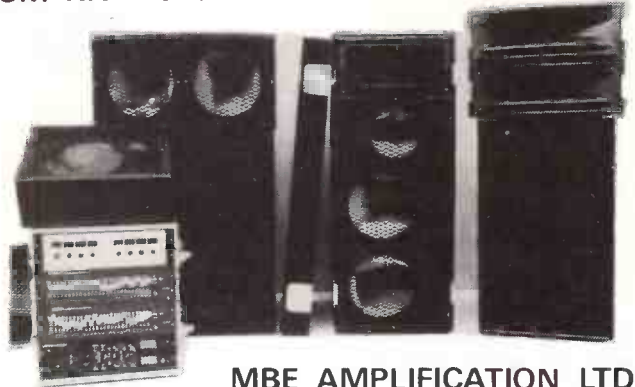
Continued on page 73





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Yamaha SG500 Outfit. New	295
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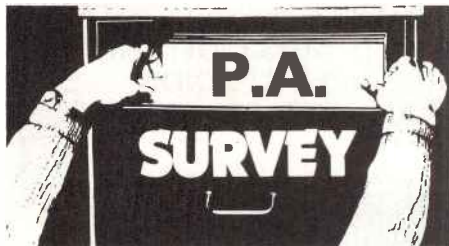
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professional P.A. equipment by Malcolm Hill: mixers, power amps and speaker cabinets. There are four models in the Modular Mixer range, based around the same circuitry, but differing in the facilities offered and routings and quality of faders fitted. The diminutive M Series are delightfully practical — powered by internal batteries in standard form and fitting into a travelling sized 'flight/suitcase'. The Hill power amplifiers are powerful beasts by anybody's standards, and at the price offered represent remarkably good value for money. The 800 watt (into 4+4 ohms) DX 700 will set you back only around £400!

KITCHENS (ACOUSTIC)

We've reviewed two Acoustic instrument combos in recent issues of Beat and on each occasion gave the product a hearty slap on the back for effort, and this is a good opportunity to mention some of the excellent p.a. products from the same stable. Acoustic do in fact manufacture a wide and comprehensive range of PA equipment, but here we'll take time out just to mention a couple — the 816 and 812 cabinets, and the 911 mixer which seem to be the best value for money and which, we hear, are readily available from all Acoustic dealers.

The 911 is a compact powered 6 in 2 out mixer rated at 200 watts in 4 ohms, featuring nine band graphic equalisation, built-in reverb, and a host of other welcome facilities. The

802 cabinet is a full range front loaded turned reflex compact cabinet suitable especially for stand mounting rated at 125 watts into a nominal 8 ohms. The larger 816 is also rated at 115 watts into 8 ohms, and contains 1 15" speaker for lows, a horn and driver for the mid range, and 2 piezo horns for the top end.

KELSEY ACOUSTICS

Kelsey's 20/4/2A mixing console features low-noise, balanced line inputs without the use of transformers, with the attendant advantages of reduced weight, improved transient response, improved cost/performance ratio and direct conversion to unbalanced line inputs using the same input connector. Equalisation is 3 band, centre frequency switchable to 1KHz or 3KHz, plus or minus 18dB. The console has 20 input channels, 4 assignable stereo subgroups, 2 output groups, one echo send (post fade), one foldback send (pre fade) and one pre fade listen earphone monitor. Metering throughout is by peak reading LED displays: each input channel has a 3 segment display and each input channel a 6 segment display.

Not strictly PA but worth taking a note of is Kelsey's acoustic guitar microphone, costing around the £60 mark.

KEMBLE YAMAHA

Yamaha, in addition to manufacturing a range of keyboard and guitars to rival the best in the world, are builders of some of the tastiest PA equipment currently available: Power amplifiers; Mixers; Speaker cabs and other related equipment.

One of the pieces of related equipment is the interesting Frequency Dividing Network, the F1030, a two or three way electronic

crossover. Conventional high level crossovers which separate low frequency material and feed it to the woofer and high frequency to the tweeter, connect between power amp and speakers operating at high levels with entirely passive components. The F1030 performs the same function but is connected between mixer and power amps, thereby functioning at lower line levels, and uses active circuits.

Casting a critical eye at the enormous Yamaha range (and occasionally stopping to feast on it!) we find another interesting PA accessory — the E1010 Analog Delay Model. The E1010 is a rack-mounted unit with recessed controls, and can provide a whole spectrum of sound alteration from pitch changing, harmony generation, flanging, tunneling, comb filtering to frequency restoration of time altered tapes!

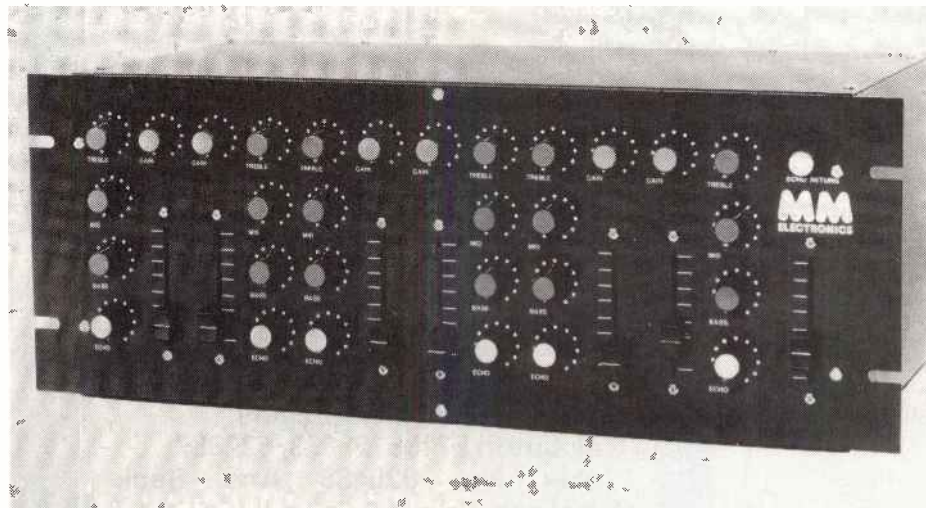
Moving further towards conventional PA, Yamaha manufacture a comprehensive selection of live mixers (anybody hear the mixing at Dylan's Earls Court gigs last year? . . . say no more and also powered mixers and speaker cabs. We suggest a large stamped addressed envelope to Mount Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes to check on all the current products, and to hear news of a new 27 band graphic, microphone, and 15 and 18" drivers and horns in component parts.

LANEY AMPLIFICATION

Laney manufacture a compact range of professional P.A. equipment at their Birmingham headquarters. The P.A 100 Reverb is a pro five channel (10 high impedance inputs) p.a. amp with treble, bass, presence, slider volume control, monitor and reverberation on/off switches. Master presence and master volume facilities are also available, and as with all Laney amplification, slave sockets are mounted on the rear of the unit. If you're not into slaves you could move up to the PA200 reverb which will pack out more punch than it's smaller brother. Still more power is available, however, if you drop your liberal attitudes, and go for either the 200 or 400 watt stereo slave amps which give 100 + 100 or 200 + 200 watts rms respectively. Laney also build p.a. speaker cabs and columns, and can be contacted at Devonshire House, High Street, Deritend, Birmingham B12 0LP.

MACINNES LABORATORIES

Macinnes should really have two



Continued on page 76

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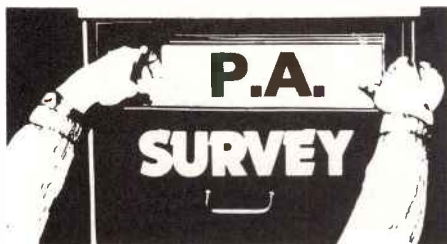
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entries in this survey, for not only do they market their own portable mixing console for PA use, they revel in being the exclusive UK importer of the tremendous range of Amcron power amplifiers, and other ancillary equipment. Amcron power amps are arguably the best known and most-preferred power amps by a list of top name bands which sounds like a who's who of the rock world. All the amps, from the diminutive 45 watts per channel D75 to the powerful 500 watts per channel DC300A feature distortion figures of less than 0.05%!

Also from Amcron come the EQ2 stereo equaliser, an Electronic 2-way variable crossover unit and a Real Time Analyser with its own internal pink noise source. We have been reliably informed that two new power amps will be making their public debut by the end of this year — as additions to the present range, not substitutions for.

MBE AMPLIFICATION

MBE Amplification are concentrating hard on three product ranges at present: their professional cabinets are all birch-plywood construction, and they can supply high quality bass bins, mid-bins, horn sleeves, sidefills and wedges, or will supply to customer's own order. The Pro Flight Cases are fibre-clad plywood heavy duty cases for anything from amp racks to entire PA systems. And then there's the famous Bluebird Flight Case range normally available through music shops — the Bluebirds feature guitar and bass cases with a solid foam block with a cutout to hold the guitar rigidly in transit.

McKENZIE ACOUSTICS

McKenzie are manufacturers of competitively priced high quality professional loudspeaker drive units which feature a coil breathing system more commonly associated with very expensive speakers: all you have to do is build the box to put them in! There are ventilation holes in the coil tube immediately over the coil winding and

breathing is effected by a hole through the magnet assembly centre pole. This design feature allows a convenient escape path for the high coil temperature and relief for the high pressure which can be set up in the coil area — say McKenzie. McKenzie are only too pleased to help potential customers with advice and design, and produce a range of speakers which should cover virtually all P.A. and instrument possible applications.

McKenzie make too many PA products to mention them all, but we'll have a go anyway: the 1265 TC. 65 watt wide range PA voice, the 80 watt version, the C1265 TC incorporating Cambic cone surround and the 80 watt version of *that*, and the C15 bass 150 watt 15" bass drive unit for guitar or organ or as a unit for the LF component in a multiple PA speaker system. All their units, suitable for PA and voice application, are widely used by leading manufacturers.

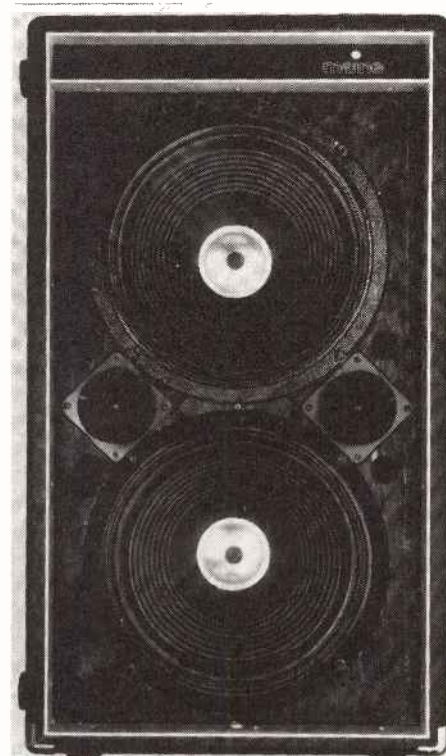
MIDAS AUDIO SYSTEMS

The standard Midas range of PA system modules enables the company to construct a console to each customer's specifications. Of special interest is their own stage monitor console, which they are confident is the most comprehensive system available. One current carrot is their 20/4/2 PA console, which they are offering at a reduction. The firm also market the MCS 200 modular electronic crossover, an affiliated product of similar design and construction quality.

MM ELECTRONICS

MM are responsible for producing a wide range of reasonably priced, high quality equipment from their Royston-based factory. Mixers, power amps, racked auxiliary gear and flightcase systems all come from the MM/PA-CE stable. The MP Series consoles (ranging from the 175 range of 8, 12 and 16 channel models upwards) have several design features in common: state of the art circuitry with uncompromising technical specifications; semi-modular assembly which gives easy access to all serviceable parts, and a simple physical layout which makes use that little bit easier.

Although the MP175 and 185 mixer ranges offer a very comprehensive specification, MM also field a series option 'pack' — i.e., standard 'modifications'. pre-fade-listen switches can be added; peak



programme indicators another option; mute switches, talkback facility, cannon connectors, balancing transformers and multi-pin connectors are all available as standard accessories.

On the other side of the PA field there's the AP360 power amplifier and a whole range of rackable 19" PA 'accessories' designed for immediate compatibility and easy transit. There's a MM Electronic Crossover, Graphic-Equaliser (7-band

Continued on page 79



In their search for perfection, Yamaha constructed and tested hundreds of prototype drum kits, listened to opinions, then formed their own before arriving at the right techniques and materials which form the basis of a revolutionary new drum collection.

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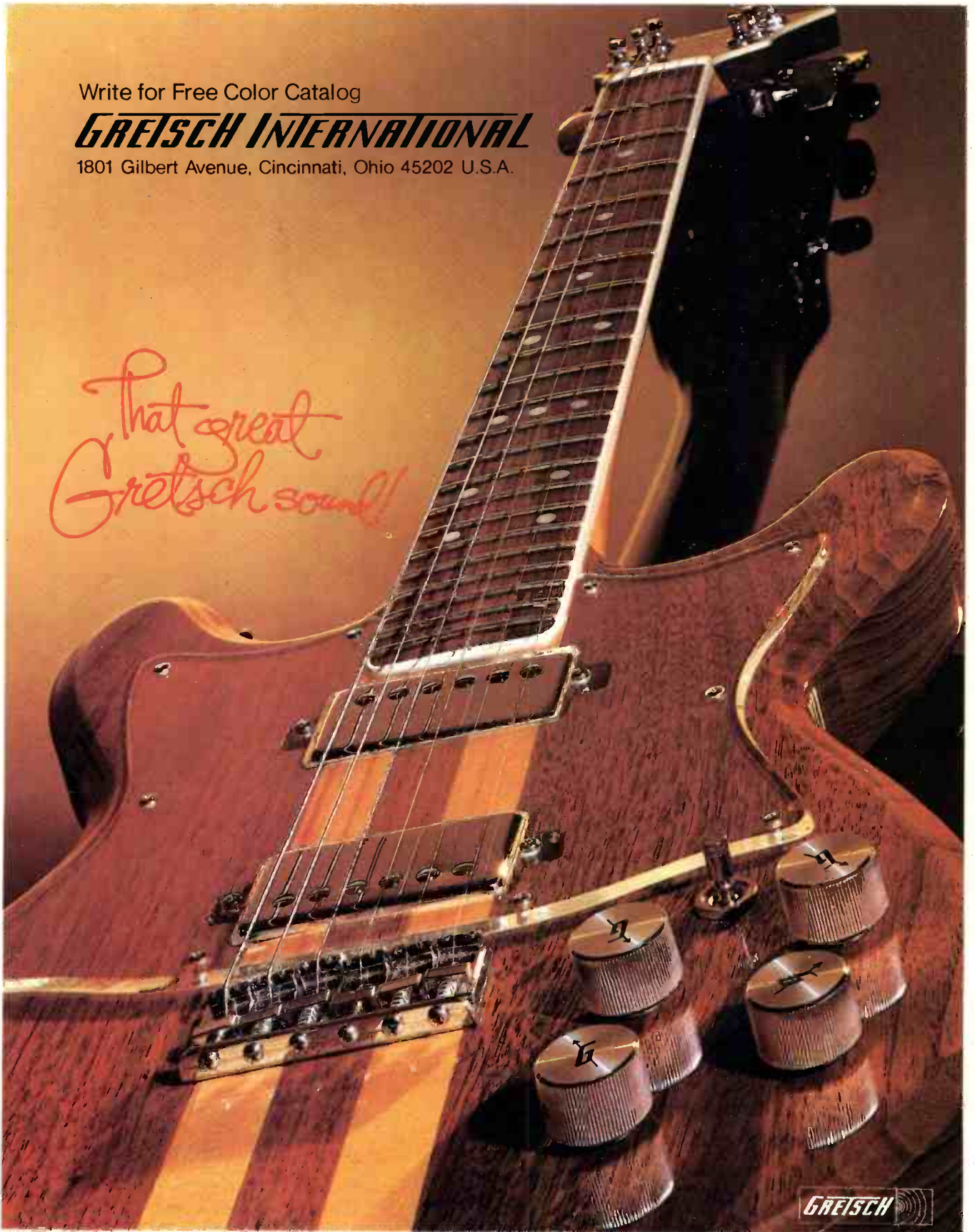
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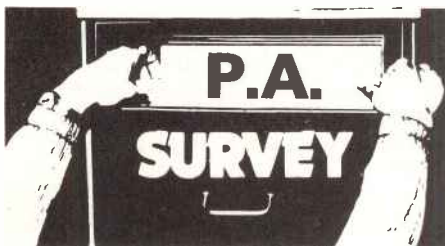
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contributor to the P.A. equipment field, marketing a comprehensive collection of power amplifiers, mixers, speakers, and mixer amplifiers.

The CS-800 power amp is rated at 400 watts per channel, and features LEDs on each channel giving precise indication of any possible overload or clipping. The back panel matching facility incorporates small plug in modules that provide the CS800 with balanced inputs and even a two way electronic crossover. The Mark 2 Series mixers include the MR-7 19" rack mounted 7 channel stereo mixing console — a handy packaged unit with rack-mounting as a particularly useful facility.

The XR-600 mixer amp is virtually an all-in p.a. system (minus the speakers of course): The XR-600 is a 6 channel 200 watt mixer amp feature pre-monitor mix, effects capability, internal reverb, graphic eq., patching capability amongst its many plus points. What to hook on to the end? Any one of the large range of PA speakers fitted with Peavey's own drive units should fit the bill admirably.

graphic), Bass-Bin filter (which provides a very fast cut off active filter to protect folded horn speaker systems), a Compressor Limiter, and a sub-mixer for keyboards or drums. All these units fit the MM racking system (and are compatible with alternative makes) which in turn fit the MM flight case rack for ultimate protection.

PEAVEY

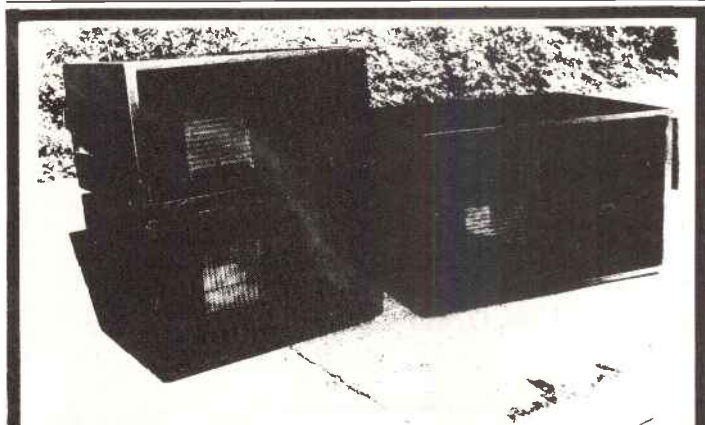
Peavey Electronics may be better known as manufacturers of one of the largest ranges of instrument amplification in the world, or as the producers of a smaller range of professional quality guitars. Ha — but, Peavey are also an important

ROOST

Roost seem to do a bit of everything, and PA is no exception. Among their wares are the CSR100P cab with two Piezo tweeters, the CAH100, 100-watt radial flare add-on horn unit, the CPT400, four Piezo tweeters in a wide dispersion cabinet and the CM20 1 x 12", 30/60/90 degrees stage monitors. Of particular interest is their 400S stereo power amp.

ROSE MORRIS

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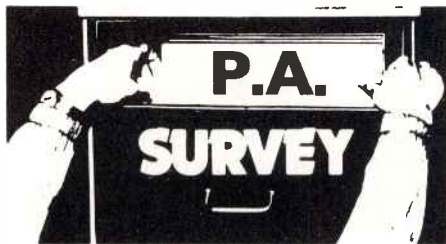
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SHURE

Shure, possibly the largest manufacturers of microphone equipment in the world, also are deeply involved in the PA field and have very recently introduced an interesting addition to their range of speakers and systems — the Model 703 Variable Dispersion Monitor. This lengthy name accurately describes the speaker's function: the speaker comes complete with dispersion high-frequency focusing wedges giving the facility to achieve a wide angled, 120 degree coverage for several performers (or greater freedom of movement on stage) or a tight 60 degree angle for minimum sound spillover. The speaker can also be placed upright or on its back for short and long throw use.

Other items of interest on offer from Shure include the SR112 and SR116 compact speaker systems which combine high output

capability, high power handling, and a wide frequency response into a compact package. Designed for use with another Shure product, the SR105-EC6 power amp but of course compatible with any good quality amplifier, the SR112 can perform anywhere from the church hall to being left outside for a couple of days of a festival!

DAVE SIMMS MUSIC PRODUCTS PROJECT ELECTRONICS LTD.

Dave Simms can offer a unique service in his ability to supply complete sound and specialised lighting systems for bands; which include the now well-established LS808 light mixers. From Project Electronics comes a range of power amps rated at 150, 300, 500 and 1000 watts, or a 4-way Theatre Speaker System in which each unit has an individual cross over: this system is said to be tremendously efficient and extremely compact — the stack only measures 4ft 10" high.

Dave has very recently introduced the new FR150 speaker cabinet especially designed to work in conjunction with the PS300 stereo amp, and tells us that he will be

launching a full range of portable band stage lighting at the Frankfurt Fair. Well, by the time this issue appears we'll be in Frankfurt and will be taking a closer look at this new system.

SIGMA SOUND

Sigma Sound, described as the PA supply company of the Midlands, manufacture and supply a comprehensive range of high powered speaker cabinets, horn enclosures and monitors to suit a variety of applications. The basic theory of the company is simple: one, to test their own equipment on the road before a new model is launched on the market, and 2) to ensure that each unit in the range is compatible with the next.

Too often manufacturers tend to push out small speaker systems and large ones, but give little chance to the up and coming band which likes a particular sound but can't afford that 5K rig immediately while wishing to stick with the same manufacturer. Sigma Sound Enterprises (SSE) build their own cabinets and use a variety of different drive units of which JBL and ATC are but two — but they serve as an indication of quality. SSE, in addition to their range of standard cabs, also specialise in

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SOUND CENTRE

Sound Centre's equipment is directed towards the solo club performer, for whom this Cardiff-based company offer a neat, compact 150 watt PA system. Besides their pre-set systems the firm offer adjustable set-ups.

SOUNDCRAFT ELECTRONICS

It's quite sobering to think that the Series 1 Soundcraft mixing consoles were introduced as recently as '74 — somehow it seems that they've always been part of the P.A. scene. Soundcraft have more recently re-vamped the original system, naming it the 1s which features all the successful facilities of the first system combined with the latest advances in technology. The 1s series is available in 12, 16 and 20 channel form, and is built into the rugged aluminium flightcase which made the Series 1 so successful. Soundcraft also manufacture larger consoles — Series 2 — for theatre and major P.A. applications, and the Series 3 modular system for top sound hire

companies. Soundcraft inform us they will be introducing two new modular console ranges in the autumn of this year.

SOUNDWAVE

Soundwave promote themselves with a precise advertising slogan which adequately describes their activities: "if you care about sound . . . we care about you." Soundwave are a specialist organisation based in Victoria Road, Romford, dealing in all aspects of PA supply, advice — you name it, they'll probably help you with it. Robin Trower, Steel Pulse, Henry Cow and (dare we say it?) The Clash (no . . . Ed!) are among many who have benefitted from Soundwave's PA experience.

The company will build custom rigs using components from just about every top equipment manufacture, or can supply off-the-shelf rigs with JBL drive units and others at extremely competitive prices. Soundwave publish their own comprehensive catalogue of PA and Live Sound Equipment which can be had for just the purchase of a large envelope, your address and a 12½p stamp for return postage.

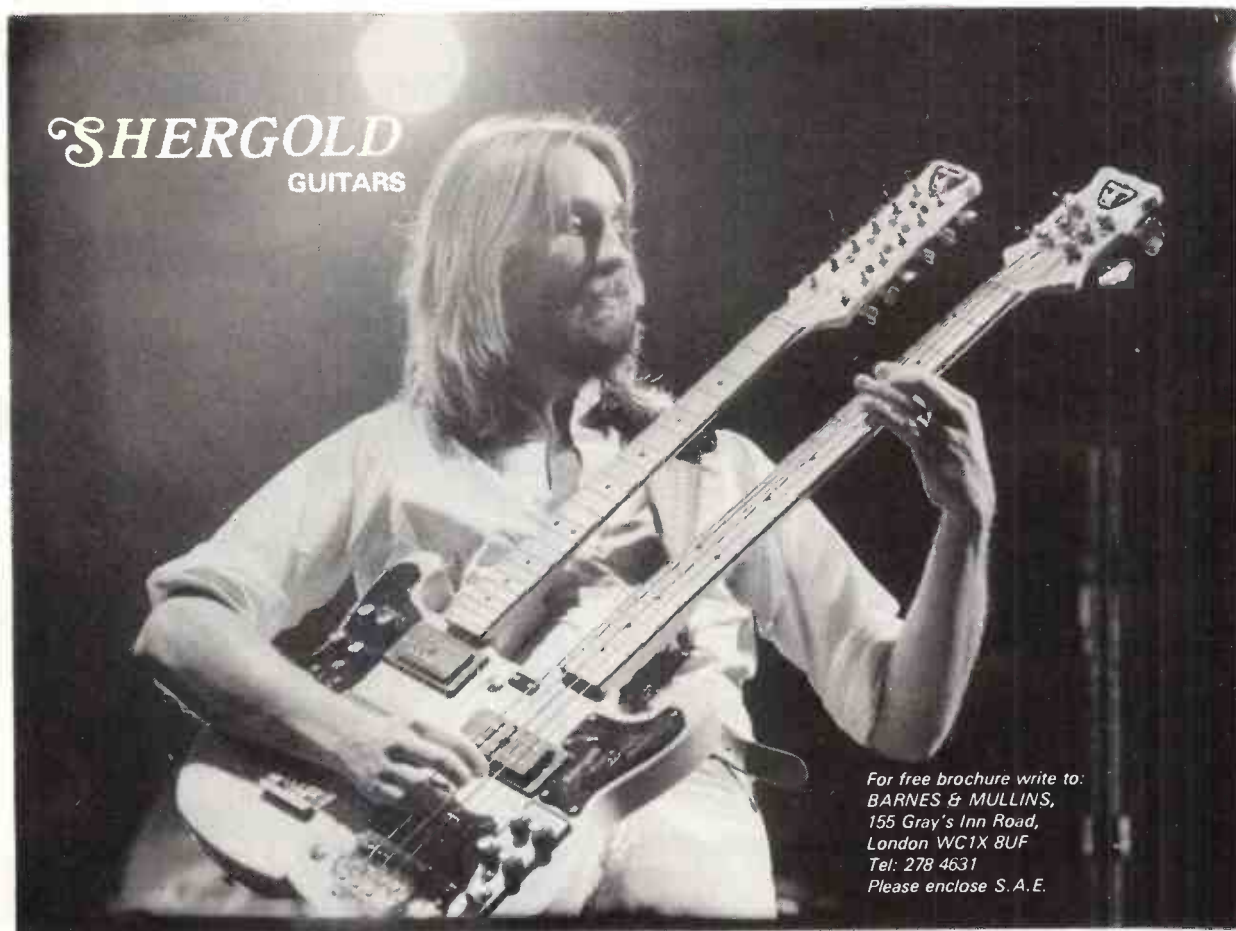
TURNER ELECTRONIC INDUSTRIES

Turner are extremely well-known and

respected for their range of excellent stereo power amplifiers — the A and B Series. The B series amps are designed for ultimate sound reproduction in studio monitoring, broadcast and PA systems, featuring advanced electro-mechanical design techniques to achieve a high performance standard and reliability combined with a welcome economy.

Another welcome design feature is the fact that the circuitry for each channel is on a plug-in glass fibre board, and the power output transistors are easily accessible. Direct substitution of circuit boards and replacement of output transistors is normally all that would be required for a full repair — in the unlikely event of a breakdown. Full details from Turner at 175 Uxbridge Road, Hanwell, London W7.

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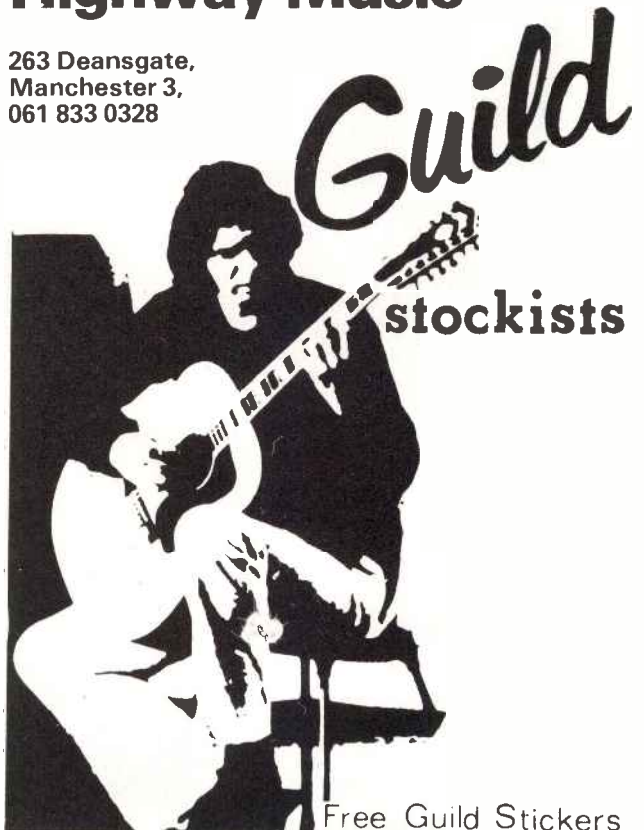
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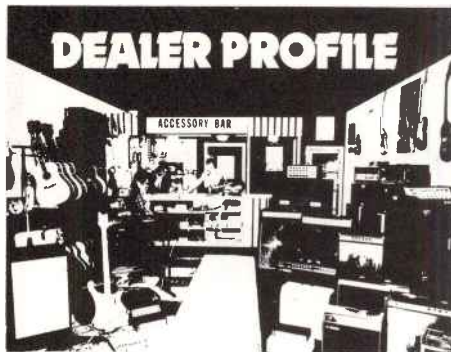
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DEALER PROFILE



HIGHWAY MUSIC Manchester

Manchester in the middle of a snow-swept rail and lorry strike-bound petrol-shortage January may not seem everyone's ideal place to visit for a day, but Beat braved the iced-up motorways all the same. Our purpose? To take a closer look at a relatively new music shop of which news has been filtering steadily down south for several months. Our team set out to investigate.

Highway Music is situated in a three storey building in Deansgate — as it turned out, one of the easiest parts of the city centre to reach: our passage from the M6 into Manchester was helpfully signposted 'Deansgate' on many occasions! Parking, on the day of our visit, was a little difficult, but in all fairness, the vast majority of Manchester commuters had taken to the roads that day due to a distinct lack of trains. So we can justifiably suppose that in more normal circumstances you could just turn up, drop the car on a meter in one of the many surrounding side streets, and saunter into the store.

Highway Music is the brainchild of two young men — Dave Boon and Robert Ed-

wards, known to one and all as Eddie. How did it come about? we asked.

"Well, we'd both been playing in bands and felt that the next move ought to be into this side of the business," Dave explained. "We set up early in '78 along with a couple of other guys — at that time we were trying to run an entertainments agency as well but it turned out to be rather impractical."

"Agency hours tend to run on from so-called office hours", Eddie continued "We'd finish here at the shop and then start work again — it began to be a 24 hour a day seven days a week number so around the middle of last year we jacked that side in — almost out of sheer exhaustion!"

At the same time, a fortuitous meeting came about. Alan Horne, one time drum salesman in another Manchester store, and full-time drummer with a well-known cabaret band Smiffy, wandered into Highway Music and suggested it might just be a good idea to open up the basement as a specialist drum centre. Eddie and Dave agreed, and by October '78 Alan was installed in the basement.

How difficult was it to start out? "Very," Dave agreed. "It's amazing how much money is swallowed by items which you don't really budget for in the beginning: solicitors' fees, alarm systems — all the necessities which at the very beginning don't seem to be that necessary." Of course, stock was also a problem at the outset, and the shop originally opened with Dave and Eddie's own equipment as virtually the only items for sale. Fortunately for all concerned, things are now considerably better?

We asked why there was a need for another music shop in Manchester. "Well, although there are other good stores in the area, no one seemed to specialise in genuine band equipment — P.A. especially, so we knew from our own experiences as musicians that a specialist store could work and would be accepted by the musicians of the area." Their early belief has definitely shown results. While franchise agencies were hard to come by in the beginning, and while cash flow was the over-riding consideration, things picked up considerably during the last quarter of the year, and Highway now seems certain for success.

The store is divided into three distinctly separate areas. The basement as we've already mentioned is set aside exclusively for drums: it's dark and crammed full of them, and Alan, still a professional, is completely conversant with the latest equipment and can really talk the drummer's language. He knew from the outset that it was necessary to have good equipment on display, not just drums for their own sake, and so he concentrates on lines in which he

has faith. "Tama seem to me to be the best available at the moment," he told us, "and the back-up service we receive is first class."

Upstairs, or rather on the ground floor, is the amplification and P.A. department. Highway tend to stock the best of many ranges of equipment: a deliberate policy. "Not all the products of all manufacturers are good," we were told, "so why stock a whole range when there might only be one or two good items in the range? We try and stock equipment in which we ourselves believe — it makes selling easier and, in a way more honest."

Amongst the items on offer in the amplification department are several bearing Highway Music's own name — some even dressed in a maroon coloured furry finish! Highway manufacture their own range of professional P.A. and instrument cabs — amongst them an extremely interesting bass cab with four speakers, two facing forward in a pressure front loaded enclosure, and two backwards with open port!

P.A. hire is, therefore, another string to the Highway bow. "There's not much demand for the really big rigs around here, but there's a hell of a lot of young bands needing a rig of some kind or another — we can put a 1k rig on the road instantly," Eddie told us. "If a band is interested in buying, then we'll set the rig up at their venue, demonstrate it, and wait for reactions. If they don't want to buy then we charge a nominal hire fee just to cover our costs."

Competitive

Upstairs is the guitar and accessory department, with the offices adjoining. There's a fair selection of guitars although we were told that for the Manchester kids a Fender is still regarded as the one to go for — there was, for example, little evidence of Japanese originals, although copies in the £100 -£200 range abounded.

Fenders are, for example, regularly discounted at around 25% and Highway like to look at themselves as being poised somewhere between the well-known rip off shops which offer just competitive prices' and the 'established' stores who offer service. "Those are the real important things in this business," Dave told us. "We try desperately to be competitive on price because it's important for us to see the customer getting the best deal he can why the hell shouldn't he? On the other hand, we do offer a complete service arrangement. We can handle all amplification repairs, and on the guitar side we can cope with anything from truss rod tightening to complete rebuilds or even custom-built guitars."

Perhaps one of the most important phrases we heard during the visit was: "We don't push off the messy little problems that musicians seem to have all the time." That means Highway will find that machine head, that particular gauge and make of top string, that cannon connector or microphone windshield which to many other stores might just seem one big drag. That also means that Highway Music should be on most Mancunians shopping list.



PA is the Highway speciality. Guitars, of course, are also in evidence.



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If a studio's worth were to be decided on looks alone, then DJM's very pretty face would carry it at least into the finals of the Miss Studio contest. Similarly, if an auspicious pile of expensive and highly technical equipment were to decide a studio's success, then again DJM would score highly for electronic points. Fortunately for all, these two factors are only significant in evaluating a studio when taken into account with a number of other factors: but, DJM certainly have a head start!

The Dick James Music organisation is reputed to have made a fair amount of money out of the rise of a certain group of four mop-heads from the northern caverns of Liverpool. Coincidentally, the fortunes of this magazine began around the same time—how else do you think we ended up being called *Beat Instrumental*? In the intervening years DJM have grown into a very successful music publishing organisation and more recently have diversified into studios. The DJM studio complex is housed on the ground floor and in the basement of James House in London's Theobalds Road, a modest splendour of marble and an air of expensive but tasteful opulence.

We were very fortunate at the time of our visit to find Chief Engineer Dick Plant with some spare time on his hands to take us through the complex. But first, some details.

DJM Studios were designed by Tom Hidley — which should



give regular studiophiles some idea of the basic concept—no corners-cut recording equipment and acoustics. The facilities are: Studio One comprising a large studio area with accompanying control room of generous proportions; Studio Two which is used primarily as a mixing suite, but with a vocal booth for overdubbing; a tape copy room, conference room with provision for video, film and pulse-slide presentation; a technical workshop where most in-house breakdowns when and if they happen can be dealt with; and a rest area with 24 hours-a-day snack and refreshment service.

Interestingly, Studio One and Two virtually duplicate one another for equipment which makes our job of reporting easier (for Studio One read 2 in

other words and vice versa!) but also makes co-ordination and co-operation between the two control rooms technically compatible.

The dominating item in the control room—as in all studios—is the desk, in this instance the MCI JH 500 Series complete with automated mixdown. The MCI is a particularly attractive desk, and Hidley's acoustic decor mirrors and matches the console's fawn facia. Main recorder is also MCI—24 track obviously—and two Studer 2 tracks handle the stereo mixdown. The outboard toys—some of which spend half their lives in Studio 2 and some of which are also duplicated in Studio 2—makes a long and wondrous list: A & D Limiter/compressors, Urei

Limiters, Lexicon and Eventide DDL's, Klark-Teknik 27 band graphic equalisers, ITI Parameters, AMS Phaser, Flanger and Delay, Keepex and Gain Brain noise gates and expanders, Aphex Aural Exciter,—the list does go on and on. Echo is provided by any one of 4 EMT plates, or of 2 Master Room reverb units. Monitoring is provided by 4 Eastlake designed JBL units set up for quadrophonic monitoring powered by BGW power amplifiers. Still, as we said earlier, a studio is not judged by its equipment alone.

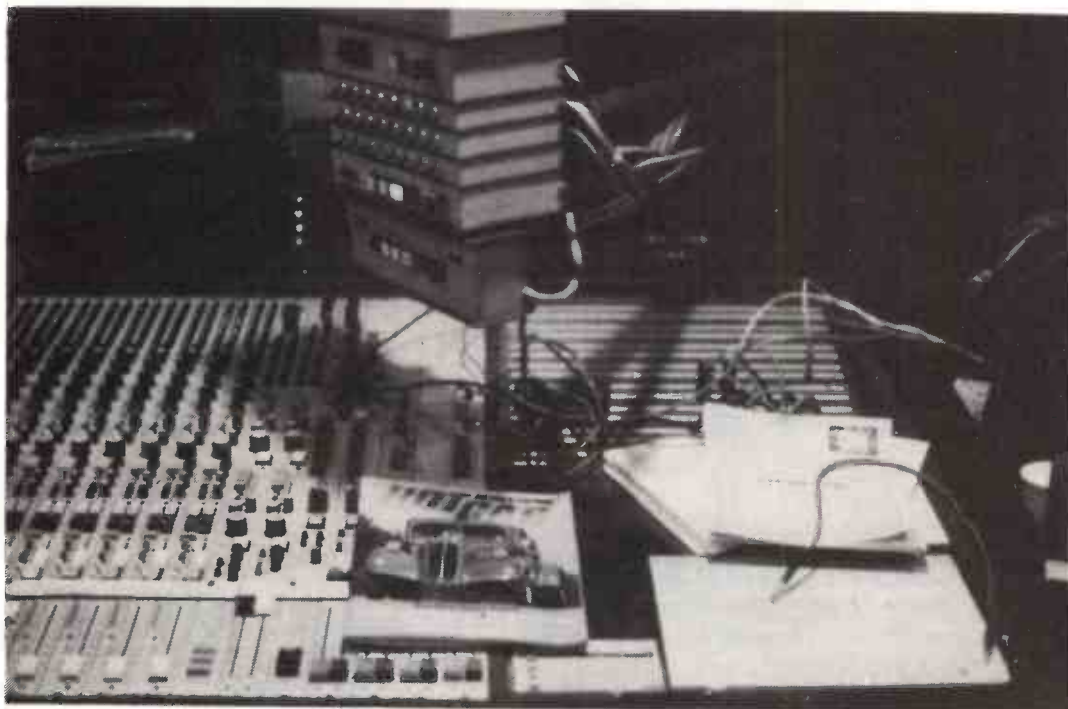
We asked Dick Plant how he gets on with the MCI desk: "It's the easiest console I've had to work on: the equalisation is especially smooth and easy to use: I can get virtually any sound I want from that eq section."

Moving into the studio one is again impressed by the opulence: fawn carpet slides over the floor and up the walls—and to reach the studio from the control room one only has to pull back two smoked glass 'patio' doors and walk straight through: no need to leave the control room, walk down a corridor and enter the studio from the outside. We particularly liked this facility as it helps to create a closer bond between producer and engineer on one side, and the artist on the other.

The studio has a number of interesting features: the end section is the 'live' area—again, separated by full height sliding glass doors from the remainder of the studio. Forward from this live area sits a Steinway grand, and further forward again a bass trap on a spring platform. Closest to the control room is another live area.

We asked if Dick had any particular tricks which he could say were unique to DJM. "Well, I do tend to use the live area at the end as much as possible. It has the right amount of ambience, and the variation of sound and feel I can obtain by varying the aperture of the glass doors, and the amount of curtains pulled around is quite amazing. I can record a drum in there with the doors half open and still get no spillage out to the piano." Comments like these would indicate that Hidley has again done a superb acoustics job.

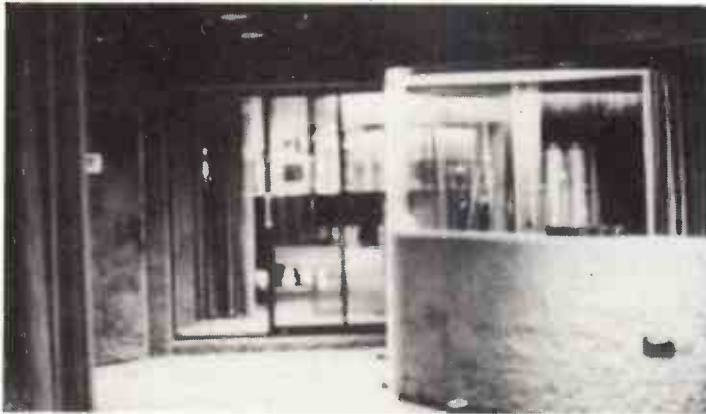
Moving down to studio 2 for a moment, we spotted the copy room on the way, which apart from all the usual copying facilities has a particularly interesting four channel mixing desk. "That was a



Beat must be under the copy of Hot Car.



The views from both sides of the glass.



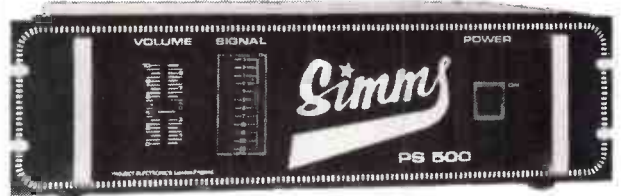
demonstration model which MCI made and we managed to obtain." The desk is, in fact, a full four channel MCI console complete with the same equalisation facilities as the main control room desk. Once again, in Studio 2, the room is dominated by yet another MCI 500 series 42 in 32 out mixing console, again with automated mixdown facilities. We questioned Dick on how he copes with the automation facility.

It takes a bit of getting used to," he admitted, "but then again, what doesn't? I have worked with another system which is possibly better on paper, but seemed prone to mechanical breakdowns and other service problems. The MCI at least seems reliable. I find that contrary to popular opinion, automated mixing can and does take longer than manual mixing, simply because it gives the engineer and producer the scope to be more finicky and precise about the process. Some producers don't like it because they don't understand the system, believe in effect the engineer is pulling a technical fast one on them, and therefore won't use it: which is, of course, ridiculous. Manual mixing does tend to be a compromise after a time, whereas if you actually have the time to spare, the computer will

allow you to get exactly the sound and definition you want."

The two studios are, in fact joined by mic lines, and there are plans afoot to get the linking gadget which will enable DJM to go 46 track recording quite soon. There are, after all, already 3 MCI 24 track machines in the building! With all this equipment, the prestige name of Tom Hidley associated with the design, and the rightly respected reputation of the Dick James company, one could be led to believe that all the top recording bands in the world have been busy making albums there. As yet, this is not the case as Dick explains. "It takes time to build a reputation for a studio, and all the equipment and technology in the world won't turn these studios into a success: they'll contribute greatly obviously, but reputations are built also on product: we've been quite busy, and we've made some really fine albums here already, so it won't be long now until the better-known bands start making enquiries."

And Beat, having spent an enjoyable couple of hours with the boys at DJM, sees no reason at all why these excellent new studios should not, in the very near future, be on the lips of many of the world's best recording artists.



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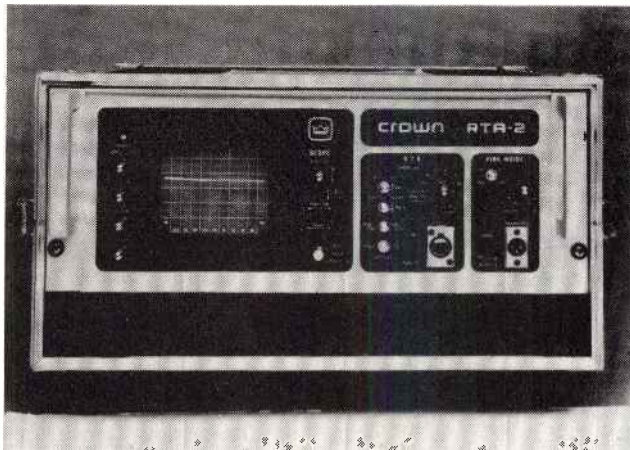
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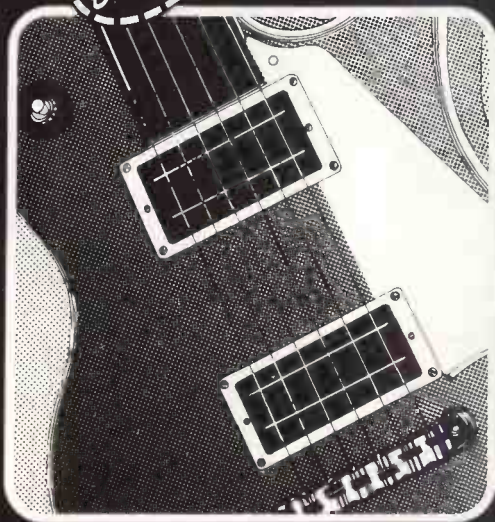
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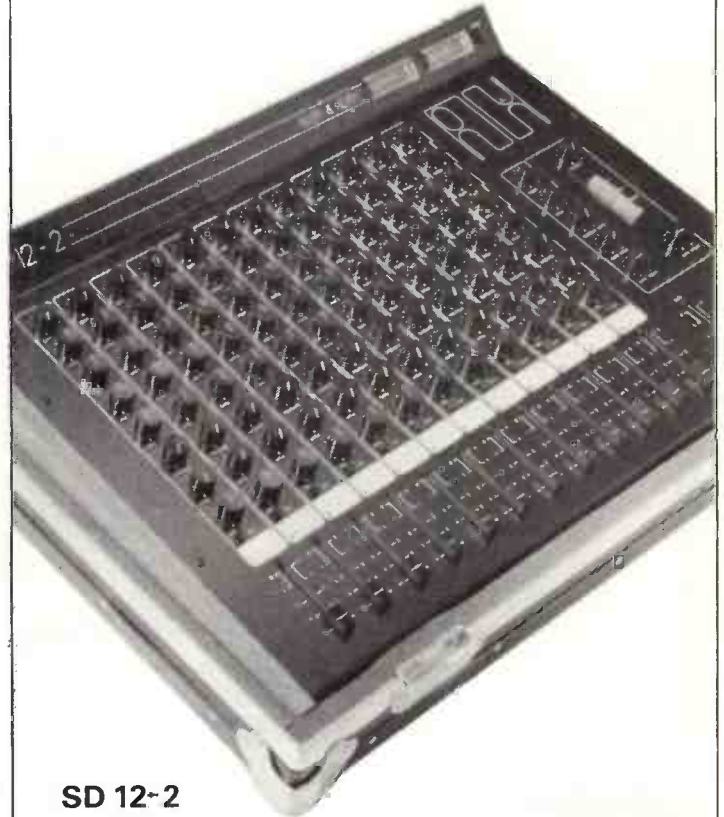
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BASS GUITARIST: work wanted in North Kent/SE London. Fender/HH — transport. Play rock, jazz rock etc. Phone Kev — Dartford 27473 evenings.

FEMALE VOCALIST (19) wishes to sing with band, cabaret act pref. Definitely *no new wave*. Glasgow only, central if poss. Phone Ellie, 041-332 0427 Mon, Tues, Wed; 8.30pm to 10.30 pm.

AVERAGE ACOUSTIC STYLE guitarist, 26, wishes to meet similar male or female, for pubs and clubs. All types of music, but mainly early Bee Gees, Eagles, Gallagher and Lyle etc. Phone Peter, Cardiff 494781 evenings.

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DRUMMER requires rock band, Chelmsford area, to play Lizzy, Purple, Rush and own material. No punks. Phone Nick on 62660.

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