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THE ALTERNATIVE MUSIC



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TODAY'S INDIE NETWORK:
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Sounds Good Distribution
Platinum College Promotions
Radio's New Rock Underground
Producer Profile: David Kahne Shines on Different Light

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FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 19, 1985

Billboard HOT 100

Compiled from a national sample of retail store and one-stop sales reports and radio playlists

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	2 WKS. AGO	WKS. ON CHART	TITLE	ARTIST	LABEL & NUMBER DISTRIBUTING LABEL
1	3	4	15	TAKE ON ME A TARNÉY (P. WAAKTAAR, MAGS. N. HARKET)	■ A-HA	WARNER BROS. 7 29011
2	4	6	10	SAVING ALL MY LOVE FOR YOU M. MASSER (M. MASSER, G. GOFFIN)	■ WHITNEY HOUSTON	ARISTA 1 9381
3	5	10	7	PART-TIME LOVER S. WONDER (S. WONDER)	STEVIE WONDER	TAMLA 1808/MOTOWN
4	1	3	12	OH SHEILA READY FOR THE WORLD (M. RILEY, G. STROZIER, G. VALENTINE)	■ READY FOR THE WORLD	MCA 52638
5	9	13	7	MIAMI VICE THEME J. HAMMER (J. HAMMER)	JAN HAMMER	MCA 52666
6	6	8	9	LONELY OL' NIGHT LITTLE BASTARD, D. GEHMAN (J. C. MELLENCAMP)	■ JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP	RIVA 880 984 7/POLYGRAM

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THE INDEPENDENTS



Vol. X, No. 4

LEITMOTIF BY BRIAN TALLEY
February 17-March 2, 1986

FEATURES

The romance may have gone out of rock's independent sector, but it's been replaced by a pragmatic, down-to-biz attitude, as indies diversify, specialize, and otherwise smarten up in their goals and procedures. Here, then, is our annual report on life among the independents:

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Music
CONNECTION
M A G A Z I N E

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Feedback

Day In, Day Out

Dear *Music Connection*:

In regard to Field Day's showcase article in your Jan. 6 issue: After reading this piece, unfortunately, I not only felt it misrepresentative of the group but felt compelled to comment. I'm positive that writer Libby Molyneaux didn't intend to generate the mood the article conveys, but still, several items must be corrected or clarified, starting with the opening line. Without a doubt, certain aspects of the music industry could be "disgusting," but it is the business I've chosen to involve myself in, so certain aspects must be appealing as well. Our superb guitarist is Daniel Nolton (not Norton—or Ralph-boy, for that matter). Personally, I feel our music definitely is *not* too complicated or sophisticated, [although] it may be stylized and different enough to cause trouble pigeonholing it for radio programming.

My comment on politics in music was taken way out of context. My idea was that the men and women who actually make the decisions within our political system are doubtfully wearing Clash t-shirts under their polyester business suits. The idea of music coming from the heart and soul means people must write what they feel. And if politics is what you feel, I could never knock it.

Lastly, the article closes with such a grim portrait of our business affairs, it seems we blame everybody-and-his-brother for our trouble. The truth is, we *did* accept outside material, but it was embarrassing and we are now back to doing strictly our own songs, one experience wiser.

This band represents vitality, quality, and a set of killer dance grooves; and I only wish *that* had been put in the picture a little better.

David Kaufman & Field Day
Hollywood Hills, CA

Long Distance Roulette

Dear *Music Connection*:

On December 13, I took the big ride to L.A. to see John Hiatt at McCabe's Guitar Shop. As always, Hiatt put on a superb show, but what really blew me out was the opening act, a guy named Charles Duncan. He came on with a couple of female backing vocalists and pulled off a set of tight, inventive, tuneful, intelligent songs that gave John Hiatt, my all-time favorite musician, something to chase.

So, when I got back, I called up McCabe's to see where this guy Duncan usually sets up shop. Maybe I could go back to your town armed with my Sony bootlegger and get some *real* music for my car stereo. But the idiot at McCabe's

uses his phone answering machine to screen his calls, not return 'em, and I gave it up after a week of long distance roulette.

Your job, should you choose to accept it, is to fill me in on the whereabouts of this fellow Charles Duncan. Since your musical coverage seems to extend to the most obscure, I thought I'd try a shot in the dark and see if any of your staff has heard of this guy.

Scot Hillman
Tulare, CA

Ed. reply: We're stumped. Can anyone out there fill us in on Duncan's whereabouts?

Back-Stryped

Dear *Music Connection*:

Last night I was at a friend's house and she had a copy of your October 14 issue. On the cover and featured inside was the group Stryper. I really like this band, and had I known they were going to be in your magazine I would have bought a few copies. I know this issue of the magazine is no longer available at the newsstands and record stores, but is it at all possible to obtain a copy of that particular issue directly through you? Your magazine is awesome!

V.F. Ross
Long Beach, CA

Ed. reply: You can order back issues through the MC office. They're \$3.50 apiece, which includes postage and handling.

The KNAC, and How to Get It

Dear *Music Connection*:

You may remember a Feedback letter of mine ("Tired of Twofers," Oct. 28) complaining about KMET and KL(OLD)S. The last line of the letter said, "Nothing will ever change, but I can dream." Well, my dreams have come true! KNAC granted my very wish. They've only been on the air a few weeks and they are doing an unbelievable job of *mixing* hard rock, metal, and normal rock to make listening to the radio pleasurable again. The only thing that would stop them from becoming number one is the fact that they are small and don't have enough power to reach everywhere (a problem KROQ had once upon a time); I'm sure in time they will fix that. Meanwhile, KMET's big new slogan for '86 is "18 in a row on compact disc." *Who cares?* I think they've got their priorities a little screwed up. People don't care whether the music is played on CD, record, or tape—it's the *music* that counts. KNAC *will* take a big chunk of the listening audience away from KMET and KLOS, forcing them to weave some of the KNAC playlist into their *own*, just like they did with KROQ a few years ago. Let's hear it for KNAC—the innovator, not the imitator.

John B.
North Hollywood, CA

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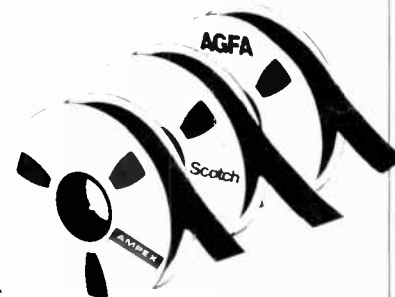
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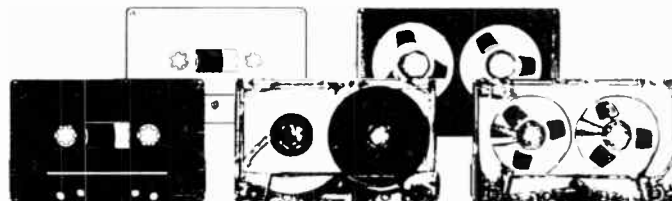


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THE MOST LISTENED TO MUSIC OF 1985

BILLBOARD HOT 100

7 OF TOP 10/15 OF TOP 20
73% OF ENTIRE YEAR-END CHART

CASHBOX TOP 100 SINGLES

9 OF TOP 10/14 OF TOP 20
71% OF ENTIRE YEAR-END CHART

RADIO & RECORDS TOP 85 OF '85

7 OF TOP 10/14 OF TOP 20
73% OF ENTIRE YEAR-END CHART

THE MOST NOMINATED MUSIC OF 1985

ASCAP & GRAMMY

BEST INSTRUMENTAL COMPOSITION

AXEL F
*Harold Faltermeyer**
MIAMI VICE THEME
Jan Hammer
WITH BELLS ON
Thad Jones

BEST CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION

GLASS: SATYAGRAHA
Phillip Glass
WEBBER: REQUIEM
Andrew Lloyd Webber†
PERLE: SERENADE NO. 3 FOR PIANO AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
George Perle
STARER: VIOLIN CONCERTO
Robert Starer

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
The Rolling Stones,† Benny Goodman

BEST RHYTHM & BLUES SONG

FREEWAY OF LOVE
Narada Michael Walden
NIGHTSHIFT
Waifer Orange
YOU GIVE GOOD LOVE
Lala

BEST ALBUM OF ORIGINAL SCORE WRITTEN FOR A MOTION PICTURE OR A TELEVISION SPECIAL

BACK TO THE FUTURE
John Colka, Chris Hayes, Huey Lewis, Sean Hopper
BEVERLY HILLS COP
Hawk, Keith Forsey, Harold Faltermeyer,* Dan Sembello, Richard Thelken*
A PASSAGE TO INDIA
*Maurice Jarre***
ST. ELMO'S FIRE
John Parr,† Richard Marx, Jay Graydon,† Stephen A. Kipner
WITNESS
*Maurice Jarre***

BEST CAST SHOW ALBUM

THE TAP DANCE KID
Robert Lorick, Henry Krieger
VERY WARM FOR MAY
Oscar Hammerstein II, Jerome Kern
WEST SIDE STORY
Stephen Sondheim, Leonard Bernstein

TRUSTEE AWARD
George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin

SONG OF THE YEAR

THE BOYS OF SUMMER
Don Henley, Mike Campbell
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT LOVE IS
Mick Jones
MONEY FOR NOTHING
Mark Knopfler†
WE ARE THE WORLD
Lionel Richie

BEST COUNTRY SONG

DESPERADOS WAITING FOR A TRAIN
Guy Clark
FORTY HOUR WEEK (FOR A LIVIN')
Dave Loggins, Don Schlitz
HIGHWAYMAN
Jimmy Webb
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU DON'T WANT ME
Rodney Crowell
LOST IN THE FIFTIES TONIGHT (IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT)
Mike Reid, Troy Seals

*GEMA †PRS **SACEM

SIGNINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

by Kenny Kerner

Marylou Eales has been appointed to the position of professional manager for Mismanagement Inc.'s Redhead Music division. Eales will oversee the Redhead Music catalog and coordinate the acquisition of new writers.

The Famous Music Corporation has signed a sub-publishing/administration deal with Silver Angel Publishing. Material includes eight songs from the platinum Sade album, *Diamond Life*, including all of the artist's hit singles thus far.

At Arista Records, Melani Rogers was upped to the position of senior director of national publicity, while Ed Simpson was promoted to national sales director. Both announcements were made from the New York offices of Arista.

Stacy Banet named I.R.S. Records' national dance club director; she'll be based at the label's New York offices. Also at I.R.S., Phil Costello is the label's new Midwest retail and promotion director working out of Chicago, and Paul Colichman was named director of ancillary markets.

Gary Schonfeld has been promoted to director of sales/Eastern region for the Westwood One Radio Networks. Schonfeld will be responsible for overseeing all of Westwood One's East Coast advertising.

Terri Fricon has been set to supervise the music for Barney Rosenzweig's new ABC Television series, *Fortune Dane*, starring Carl Weathers. Fricon also provides musical supervision for Rosenzweig's other TV series, *Cagney & Lacey*.

Atlantic Records has announced two appointments in its album promotion department. Danny Buch has been promoted to director of national album promotion and David Fleischman to co-director of national album promotion. Both are based at the company's New York offices.

Deneice Williams has signed with Sparrow Records, and her first gospel LP, *God Is Truly Amazing*, will be released in May.

Chuck Niles has joined Morgan & Morgan public relations as a part-time field representative. Niles is best known as an on-air personality for radio station KKGQ.

Texas-based guitarist Eric Johnson has been signed to a recording deal with Warner Bros. Records, who will release Johnson's debut album, *Tones*, on the Reprise label.

Elektra's *Guadalcanal Diary* is scheduled to begin recording its debut album at Atlantic's Studio One, with Rodney Mills producing. Mills has most recently produced *38 Special* and the Cruzados.

Patti Oates has joined the Warner Bros. national album promotion team and will continue to be based in Los Angeles. Announcement was made by George Gerrity, vice president of promotion for the label.

Dain Eric has been named the vice president of acquisitions for Radio Vision International, the licensing agency for home video and broadcast rights. Eric's responsibilities will include the acquisition of product and packaging shows for television syndication and home video, both domestically and abroad. Eric joins RVI from the Discovery Music Network.

Steve Little, president of Straight Ahead Management, has announced the signing of Daddy Outa Sight and the Slimbeats to his management company. Daddy Outa Sight is currently recording at Ocean Way Studios.

News

LABELS

Enigma Records:

by Kenny Kerner

LOS ANGELES—If all goes according to plan, 1986 will see the Enigma Records Group emerge as a major force in the music industry. Wesley Hein, president of the Enigma Group, is intent on doing just that—and a lot more, as the label nears the completion of its first year of independence.

In an exclusive interview, Hein told *MC* that the label "severed all financial and corporate ties with Greenworld in June, 1985, to become an independent entity." Hein continued, "Our plan now is to beef up our staff and to keep reinvesting our profits. I'd love to open up an East Coast office and do the same thing there."

Although Hein vows never to leave the independent marketplace, he admits that Enigma has indeed been looking for major label distribution. "We need a major label," continued Hein, "to give the Enigma artists the proper national exposure that they deserve. We'd like to ship and sell a lot of records, and a major label distribution deal would allow us to do this with an act like Stryper, for example. It won't be too long before we'll need a major's single promo force as well for our top-40 records."

Hein also discussed the reasons behind the creation of the newly formed Restless Records: "Restless was created to provide a working environment for Enigma's more provocative, experimental, and alternative musical acts. The really great thing about Restless is that we have a lot of bands that won't become major leaguers, but are definitely worth working with. Restless is for artists that can sell a few thousand records, tour clubs on the local level, and need a year or two to develop."

Whereas most record companies rely on 20 percent of their artists to carry the remaining 80 percent, Hein expects the reverse to be true for the Enigma/Restless Group. "At Restless, we really do expect 80 percent of the artists to carry the remaining 20 percent that are being developed," he said. "Our aim for record sales is a realistic one. At the majors, lots of acts that sell 200,000 records are dropped because they can't seem to move on to the next level of sales. If we take an artist like Mojo Nixon and spend this year doubling or

The Indie as a Major Force

tripling his sales figures to about 10,000 units, [then] we've been incredibly successful with his career. That's a realistic look at the kind of things we'll do at Restless."

This year, the label pledges to put total support behind two of its priority acts, Fear and the Dead Milkmen, both of which have been able to sell records and tour constantly.

In a further attempt to exploit their artists, both Enigma and Restless will become heavily involved in motion picture soundtracks. Straying from the traditional formula of calling in masters such as John Williams or Henry Mancini,

the labels will think in terms of their acts supplying the original material to motion pictures. The soundtrack to *Ramaway Train* is already a major success for Enigma. In the near future, Restless Records will release the soundtrack to *Terrorvision*, which features brand new material from the Fibonaccis.

Wesley Hein summed up the label's outlook in this way: "I guess you could say we're like a cross between A&M and Sire Records. We're a medium-sized, closely knit label like A&M, but with the street sense of Sire's early years." ■



The Dead Milkmen (top) and the Neighborhoods are but two of the left-of-center bands featured on Enigma's Restless Variations compilation.

UCLA Extension Schedules Indie Forum

by D.W. Boyd

LOS ANGELES—Each year, some 40 industry guests get together for a one-day UCLA Extension class that features the very latest information on independent record labels. This year, "The Independent Record Game: A Practical Guide to Releasing Records Through Independent Distribution" is set to convene June 27-29.

Coordinated by songwriter/journalist K.A. Parker and Famous Music's senior creative director, Alan Melina, the course will offer information valuable to artists, managers, and producers who have already released records through independent means or who are on

the brink of doing so.

Scheduled speakers at the forum include Stu Yahm (Suite Beat labels), Ron Keel (recording artist), Bob Biggs (president, Slash Records), Monica Lynch (president, Tommy Boy Records), Wes Hein (vice president, Enigma Records), David Chackler (president, Private Eye Records), and musician Dean Chamberlain.

"The Independent Record Game" will meet on the UCLA campus Friday evening, June 27th, as well as all day Saturday and Sunday. For more information and registration, call the UCLA Extension at (213) 825-9064. ■

News

RADIO

Lee Abrams:

AOR Formats Will Change

by Kenny Kerner

LOS ANGELES—Lee Abrams specializes in understanding the wants and needs of the 18-to-40-year-old listener. He has spent some 15 years studying the "yuppies," or, as he calls them, "the new mainstream audience."

It is for this expertise that Abrams and his firm (Burkhart/Abrams/Michaels/Douglas & Associates) have been hired as consultants for *Rolling Stone* magazine, MTV, the Coca-Cola Company, the Pointer Sisters, Yes, Asia, and several dozen radio stations across the country.

It all boils down to a matter of dollars and sense for Abrams, who can boast that 92 percent of the radio stations he's consulted have successfully increased their ratings.

Abrams recently concluded a three-day meeting with some 70 AOR stations (all clients), during which time plans and changes for the coming year were discussed. "The main thing we talked about," said Abrams, "was to understand our audience better and to try and get away from traditional radio thinking by getting a little more adventurous. We're trying to get

back to the standards that progressive AOR's had in the early Seventies."

Abrams sees some major AOR format changes taking place during the coming year. "I think that the main thing you will see is an opening up with the more important artists. Instead of playing one or two cuts on an album, the stations will be playing deeper into the album. When they play Pink Floyd, they won't just play 'Money' or 'Another Brick in the Wall.' They'll play past the first two cuts on each side. Also, I think that the AOR's are going to lessen the airplay on some of the rock oldies and start listening to some more adventurous music from some of the more electric, new-age-type artists."

Several weeks ago, in an effort to bolster its ratings, radio station KNAC switched to an all rock/heavy metal format. Lee Abrams had these observations with regard to the format change: "I think it's good from the standpoint of taking a lot of pressure off the AOR stations that were trying to gear to the 18-to-40-year-old. It gives those people who are into teen metal a place to go."

Abrams' advice isn't only for hire by radio stations. He very often consults with major corporations toward gearing up an effective ad campaign to a specific demographic area. It's also not unusual to find him meeting with major recording artists.

The Alan Parsons Project, Alvin Lee, and Golden Earring are newer clients all seeking advice from Abrams. "I try to tell them who their audience is and what they expect to hear," Abrams revealed. "Sometimes they get a little off the track by trying for too many singles. Sometimes, there are other reasons."

The two things that Lee Abrams is certain of are that the rock generation in general is getting older, and that the music we listen to during the ages of 16-to-20 is the music that we like for life. Abrams doesn't feel that he'll ever lose his objectivity or his expertise. He would eventually like to get into television and supply a similar service with regard to TV pilots and new programming. ■

RADIO REPORT

by Kenny Ryback

Listed below are local bands currently being played on Southern California AOR/MODERN MUSIC radio stations. New additions to the playlist being broadcast on a regular rotation are marked with an *. In addition, selected local talent featured on specialty shows are noted.

KROQ

Animation*
Stan Ridgway*
Pandoras
Long Ryders
Felony

KMET 92.5

Jeff Paris*
Mr. Mister
KNAC
105.5 FM
Odin*
Black'n'Blue
W.A.S.P.
Stryper
Dokken
Great White
Autograph

91X

Pandoras*
Stan Ridgway*
Untouchables*
Bangles*
Long Ryders
Wall of Voodoo
Oingo Boingo
Mr. Mister

KLOS 95.5

Dokken
Mr. Mister
Local Music Show
Pandoras
Nightwatch
Chris Hickey
Warrant
No Thank
Shark Island
Lazer Eyes
James House
Infrared
National Anthem
Scott Seskind
Jester

101 KGB FM

Jeff Paris
Dokken
Mr. Mister
Cruzados
Homegrown Hour
Flyweil
Gavin McLeod
Frankie Hill
Private Doman
Color TV
Beat Farmers
Mojo Nixon
Tell-Tale Hearts
Origin

FINE TUNING:

PUT IT IN: If you've been listening to KMET, you're already aware that new Program Director Larry Bruce is serious about returning the MET to its once mighty position again. In addition to introducing a tremendous amount of current music to the playlist, KMET is soliciting listener participation by asking for your feedback. With the input line open 24 hours a day, you can talk about it and do something about it at the same time. If you want to hear more local music, more jazz, or more artist interviews, get on the horn and give 'em a shout at 520-KMET (that's for both 213 and 818 area codes).

FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET: Four weeks after leaving KGB-FM to join WYYY as program director, Ted Edwards returns to the San Diego AOR to succeed Larry Bruce as program director. One of Ted's first duties will be to appoint a new music director. We'll keep you posted.

SECRET IDENTITY REVEALED: Who was that masked broadcaster staging rock wars nightly on KMET...and whatever happened to him? A recent tip from the Bay Area led us to San Francisco's Embarcadero Center, where we found him, 32 floors up. When the sun goes down, the mic goes on. He now calls himself Rick Anderson. We knew him as Max Hunter. You can call him anything you want at (415) 478-3697.

THE BOOB TUBE: If you can tear yourself away from MTV this Saturday, February 15th, "Pure Rock" programmer Jimmy "The Saint" Christopher is scheduled to match wits with Walloping Wally George. The last time, things got a little out-of-hand and "The Saint" was thrown out of the Hot Seat. This time, he's coming prepared with his own personal bodyguard—and his bodyguard comes prepared to protect and defend in her leather mini-skirt and spiked heels. It airs at 11 p.m., channel 56. Be there!

LEGISLATION

Songwriters Guild Meets

by Sue Gold

BEVERLY HILLS—Blanket licensing, derivative rights, and home taping were the topics of the latest meeting of the Songwriters Guild of America, held at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel earlier this month. Congressman Howard L. Berman (D-Los Angeles) addressed the songwriters to explain the status of three bills now in Congress that deal with the aforementioned issues.

The source/blanket licensing bill seeks to shift the licensing of music on syndicated programs from the television stations to the program producers, thus eliminating the need for a blanket license. Berman pointed out that the issue of blanket licenses has already been in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, and now TV station owners were trying to use Congress as a means of getting what they want. He explained that if the station owners didn't want to pay for a blanket

license, there were other alternatives, such as source licensing and a direct license, but the owners have not utilized them as yet. If the bill were to be passed, it would mean a drastic reduction in the amount of royalties paid to the songwriters for their work.

A bill that the Songwriters Guild does support is one on home taping. This bill would provide a royalty on blank tapes and tape machines. "It is estimated that unauthorized taping is siphoning off at least a billion dollars a year from the industry. This bill is trying to do something about that," Berman said. "This is a bill that is opposed by a broad coalition, led by manufacturers and distributors of tape machines and blank tapes, but we want to try and provide a royalty on high-quality blank tapes."

The third bill discussed concerns derivative rights. Songwriters suffered a major disappointment in

this area last year, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the publisher's share of mechanical royalties on recordings cut before the termination date in a songwriters agreement would not go to the writers. Berman explained that this issue will come up in Congress again this year. "The House will have a hearing on this in the spring. There are complicated aspects of this bill, like with motion pictures, but I'm trying to work it out," he said. "These bills are tough. There is always a tough fight when big money is at stake."

Berman offered several suggestions as to how to fight for the rights of songwriters. "You have to keep the letters coming. Write to the people in Congress. Come to Washington and bring people with you," he suggested. "With this kind of an effort, we can stop the bill." ■

LOCAL NOTES

Compiled by
Bud Scoppa &
Kenny Kerner



▲ **OVER THE RAINBOW:** An ever-trendy British pub in Hollywood was the setting for this "chance" meeting between two former Rainbow vocalists, **Graham Bonnet** (left) and **Ronnie James Dio**. The two reminisced about days gone by and then wished each other well, it says here. Dio later went out onstage in front of an SRO crowd at the Forum and continued his "Sacred Heart Tour." Bonnet just went home.

DON'T ADDRESS ME THAT WAY: Tony Thijsen of Earthshine Records was mighty pleased with Screamin' Lord Duff's recent review of his cassette, *Collage*. He even wrote Duff to tell him the response was so great he'd been forced to unplug his phone now and then. The only problem was, we misread his suite number as 6L-0. That ain't it. Earthshine's correct address is 7131 Owensmouth Avenue, Suite 64-D, Canoga Park, CA 91303.

RAVES FROM THE GRAVE: Didja see the endorsements glued to the shrinkwrap of Plasticland's new Enigma LP, *Wonder Wonderful Wonderland?* To wit: "Mesmerizing"—Brian Jones; "Beats anything I ever did"—John Lennon; "Blew My Mind"—Jimi Hendrix; "The rhythms are incredible"—Keith Moon; "If I were alive today, I'd buy this record"—Jim Morrison. Wonderful, indeed.

HELLION ON WHEELS: Hellion bassist Alex Campbell and guitarist Chet Thompson were both injured when Campbell's Porsche was struck by an oncoming vehicle. According to the group's management, both musicians will be taking some time off for therapy, but the band expects to resume its recording activities in a few weeks.

MISSING: Mark Medina of Perfect Stranger called *MC* to report that the band's stage backdrop was missing following their performance at Wong's West on January 18th. Medina promises that a reward will be paid for its return and positively no questions will be asked. Any clues regarding the whereabouts of said backdrop should be reported to Medina at (818) 509-1615.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE: Motley Crue's Tommy Lee and *Dynasty* star Heather Locklear visited Something's Fishy Restaurant in Woodland Hills recently, but it wasn't just a casual dinner date. The couple celebrated the announcement of their wedding engagement to the strains of the Kushite Raiders, who were performing at the club that evening. No specific wedding date was asked for nor offered.



▲ **"IF YOU LOVE MUSIC—PLAY IT!":** Rock guitarist **Yngwie Malmsteen** is the first artist to represent the music products industry in a new ad campaign designed to encourage young people to play musical instruments. Pictured above are (from left): **Norman Seef**, film director of the Malmsteen spots; **Elizabeth Scott**, director of public relations for the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM), organizers of the campaign; **Malmsteen**; and **Con Griffin**, NAMM vice president and owner of West L.A. Music in Los Angeles. The spots will run on MTV in selected test markets beginning this March.

JIMI REVISITED: The newly reissued Reprise Records has released *Jimi Plays Monterey*, a live recording of Jimi Hendrix's historic June 18, 1967 performance at the Monterey Pop Festival. The album will contain the complete and unedited concert by Hendrix—in the original order of performance. Selections include "Like a Rolling Stone," "Hey Joe," "Killing Floor," "Purple Haze," "Foxy Lady," and "The Wind Cries Mary." The album also contains the voice of the late Brian Jones, who introduces Hendrix to the Monterey audience.

CALLING ALL CLUB 88 VETS: Alas, the venerable and once-splendid Club 88, site of numerous classic club sets over the past eight or ten years, is in grave danger of closing its doors forever. Not wanting to lose a rock landmark of this magnitude, Mac Neely is putting together a three-day fund-raiser (321-23) at the 88 to keep the joint in business. That's where you guys & gals come in: If your band was a staple of the 88 way back when, you're invited to reunite your combo for old-times' sake and crank up on the cult class. Our idea of the ultimate Club 88 reunion bill would involve Skin (later Code Blue), the Motels, the Pop (now Silver Tears), and Elton Duck (now P.D.A.). We'd pay a pretty penny to witness that event. If yer interested in participating, call Mac at (818) 886-6378; she guarantees good bands and a party atmosphere at the reunion. Go for it, gang.

A&R RUMOR MILL: Arista's Jamie Cohen to CBS? Stay tuned. We kept the lid on the Carole Childs/Dylan thing, only to be "scooped" by *People* months after the fact. From now on, we're gonna make like Cosell and tell it like it (probably) is.

CALLING BILL BOONIE! Mike Brown of PolyGram Records is trying to track down the elusive Bodine in order to further track down artist Beth Anderson. (And let's remember to put referrals on our old numbers when we get them disconnected, okay fellas!)

—RAC

HELP WANTED: The Three O'Clock (currently signed to I.R.S.) are looking for a permanent guitarist to join the band for all future recordings and touring projects. No contact name or number was left, but if you're really interested, you'll find a way to reach the boys... And while we're looking for musicians, PolyGram's Candy is looking for a full-time lead singer. Call Jonathan at (213) 466-1929.

X MARKS THE SPOT: *The Unheard Music*, a new feature film that's being billed as a "portrait" of L.A.'s beloved X, premieres February 28th at the Four Star Theatre at Wilshire and LaBrea. The Four Star was chosen for its size (800 seats), ambience, and heavy-duty sound system, all the better to put across the richness of the film's toughly tender subject matter. *The Unheard Music*, directed by William T. Morgan, was filmed in L.A. over a five-year period. We'll be telling you more about it, hopefully next ish.

LOYD'S OF LOS ANGELES: We don't make a habit of hyping the competition, but, to be perfectly frank, we've been getting an ongoing kick out of "The Critical List," an *L.A. Weekly* column written (not quite every week) by the ever-amusing Robert Lloyd. This cutup's wry ruminations—jammed into a half-page in 8 pt. type—are littered with insights and full of heart. We were particularly charmed by his February 7th column, with its extensive evocations of the Bangles, Bobby Short, and 17 Pygmies (Lloyd's tastes are catholic, y'see). On the Bangles: "Sometimes one just wishes to enjoy oneself—a sort of religious experience. I suppose—to bask in the beat, to revel in the certain tingle, certain release, that comes only from a good hook, effectively delivered. In terms of pure pop stimulation, you're not going to find anything more reliable than *[Different Light]*. It works..." Wish we'd said that.

CRAMPS ABROAD: *A Date With Elvis* is the unlikely but still perfect title of the new Cramps album just released in Europe. The success of their most recent single, "Can Your Pussy Do the Dog" (currently top 30 in the U.K.) will enable the Cramps to embark on a major European tour in mid-March.

TATTOO YOU: Motley Crue's Nikki Sixx brought the group's total number of tattoos to a resounding 21 when he added a set of luscious red lips to his pubic area. Commenting on the position of his latest tattoo, Sixx said, "I guess this is just another excuse to take my pants down." And speaking of the Crue, Dante Bonutto has just authored *Motley Crue: The Official Biography* (Cherry Lane Press). It's 96 pages long (or short) and covers the first five years of the band. According to Bonutto, "Motley Crue isn't simply a musical project; more a philosophy, a way of life. All things to all men and a lot more to all women."

BIG BAD BEARS O.O.: The champs are loathe to give up the spotlight weeks after the Super Bore...er...Bowl. Now, the Fridge and Walter Payton have collaborated on a twelve-inch dance single entitled "Together" (Chicago Record & Filmworks). This we can live without. We're holding out for a "mad rap" between Mike Ditka and Buddy Ryan.

THREE ON ONE: Realizing how hot soundtrack albums have become, RCA is releasing the first three singles to its *Youngblood* soundtrack LP simultaneously. Mickey Thomas, Nick Gilder, and Glenn Jones have the honors.

THE STATE OF THE UNDERGROUND music scene in L.A. has been crystallized into a pair of bitchen new indie compilations, SST's *The Blasting Concept* (with previously unreleased cuts from the Minutemen, Husker Du, Black Flag, Saccharine Trust, and other combos), and Enigma's *Restless Variations* (discussed in a nearby news story). Additionally, SST has plans to release a performance long-form video of the aforementioned bands, plus the critically acclaimed *Meat Puppets*... While we're on the subject, Rhino is planning on a big CD release under its new deal with Capitol; this'll include a version of the essential *Nuggets* compilation. OBOY! Additionally, Rhino/Capitol has just released a single and LP by the Pandoras, "In and Out of My Life (In a Day)" and *Stop Pretending*, respectively. That's ► the adorable Pandoras themselves in the adjacent photo.

Photo by Lester Cohen



OBSESSED & WELL-DRESSED: ▲ ASCAP member Bill Wadhams of Animation (far right) huddles with Dick Clark and ASCAP West Coast membership representative Mary Jo Mennella (left) and Loretta Munoz after the American Music Awards. Wadhams was a presenter on the annual awards telecast. Animation's new LP, *Strange Behavior*, has just shipped. It includes the single, "I, Engineer."

FIXIN' TO LIVE RAG: Vietnam vets will be honored with a long-overdue homecoming celebration in an all-star concert they're calling "Welcome Home". It'll take place February 24th, at the Inglewood Forum. Scheduled to appear in the four-hour event are Herbie Hancock, Gary U.S. Bonds, Brian Wilson, War, Ed Asner, and Country Joe & the Fish. Money raised from the show will be distributed to various organizations dedicated to helping Vietnam veterans. Tickets for the 7 p.m. show are available at the Forum box office and through Ticketmaster. Y'all come. —SG

AN OUNCE OF PROTECTION: Paul Geller, Esq., will be the guest speaker on February 20th when the Los Angeles County Bar Association Intellectual Property and Unfair Competitions Section meets for its monthly forum. Topic will be U.S. Copyright Protection & Infringement in Foreign Territories, and meeting/luncheon will be held at the Beverly Hillcrest Hotel. For reservations call (213) 627-2727.

SO TRUE, SO TRUE: When Black Sabbath leader Tony Iommi was asked how to become a rock & roll star, he had some very interesting advice on the subject: "First, learn how to play two chords," he suggested. "Then, get yourself an attorney before you learn the third."

THE SAME MOUTH: Bob Dylan ▶ has enlisted the help of Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers for an upcoming five-week tour of Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. This seemingly perfect union evolved out of the rehearsals and subsequent performance by Dylan & the HB's at the Farm Aid benefit last September. Pictured (l-r) are Tom Petty, Stan Lynch, Dylan, Howie Epstein, Mike Campbell, and Benmont Tench. A cosmic resemblance, ain't it?

SUPERGROUP SWEEPSTAKES: Some time this March, Arista Records will be releasing the debut album from newly signed GTR. What's interesting about the band is that for the first time since the Yardbirds, a band will feature two well-known lead guitarists—in this case, Steve Hackett and Steve Howe. Hackett, a former Genesis member, and Howe, formerly with Yes and Asia, will be complemented by vocalist Max Bacon, bassist Phil Spalding, and drummer Jonathan Mover, the only American in the band (he defected from Marillion). GTR's debut album is being produced in London by Geoff Downes, who provided similar services for Yes and Asia.



Photo by Neal Preston

DOUBLE-DRIBBLER: Irving Azoff, president of MCA Records and a big Lakers fan, has announced a long-term, exclusive, multi-album, custom-label deal with basketball superstar Kareem Abdul Jabbar's Cranberry Records. Jabbar will use the label to bring new and established artists to his Cranberry/MCA label. Kareem's extensive collection of jazz records was destroyed in a fire two years ago; now he can reissue the albums he was unable to replace.

DAMN IT: SLD wants it noted that the Damned's bassist is named Bryn—not Bryan—Merrick, as per our last ish. Also, the NAIMM issue Wall of Voodoo story had the title wrong on the Ridgway-Copeland collaboration. It's "Don't Box Me In," not "Don't Fence Me In."

TEAMWORK: Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), in association with Southern California Safe Ride Programs, has joined with KROQ to stage a benefit concert at the Stardust Ballroom on February 21st. Scheduled to appear are Felony T.S.Q.L., Tex & the Horseheads, and Boy Waiting. A portion of the gross ticket receipts will be donated to the Safe Ride Programs. KROQ morning jock Ramonido will host the event.

PRIMETIME MOVERS: The Prime Movers, who became the Time Movers, are now calling themselves the Prime Movers, Ltd., and they're all off to Europe after reading MC's "Bands Across the Water" story in our last issue. Their "On the Trail" single just cracked the BBC charts. Talk about the power of the press!

WHILE THE IRON IS HOT: Lou Gossett and Jason Gedrick star in the forthcoming King Cobra video, "Iron Eagle (Never Say Die)." Gossett portrays a drill instructor (what else), Gedrick is his able sidekick, and the band...why, they play fighter pilots in training, of course. Gossett will be charged with teaching King Cobra members how to become soldiers. All band members have agreed to get their hair sheared especially for the filming of the video. We're talkin' commitment here.

SCHOLARSHIPS: Fender Musical Instruments and the Guitar Institute of Technology have announced the first annual Fender/GIT Scholarship Competition Program. The competition, which awards two all-expense paid one-year scholarships to GIT, is open to all players between the ages of 17-22, with one U.S. and one international winner to be chosen. In addition, the top four winning entries in both the U.S. and international competitions will receive a Fender guitar and amp. The scholarship takes effect in September, 1986. To apply for the scholarships, players should contact local Fender dealers for an application form. Winners will be announced publicly at the summer NAMM show, which takes place in Chicago this June.

NASTY ACCIDENT: Metal Blade recording artists Nasty Savage are actively looking for a new bass player. Seems as if bassist Fred Dregishan sustained a rather serious injury while the band was on tour in New Orleans. Dregishan is now undergoing reconstructive surgery on his hand and arm. Qualified bassists can show their goods to Ben, c/o PO Box 2012, Brandon, Florida 33511.



GO WHERE YOU WANNA GO TIME TRAVELING WITH THE BANGLES

by Bud Scoppa

Brace yourselves, gang—this is a shocker. Only a handful of individuals—Prince, Alex Chilton, Nicholas Meyer, Joni Mitchell, Mike Gormley, and Sid Griffin, plus Wells and McGuinn themselves—know the whole story, and they're sworn to secrecy. I shouldn't do this, but I can't help myself.

Twenty years ago, Byrds leader Jim McGuinn got in way over his head with some Southeast Asian electro-cosmic secret society, and, quite by accident, summoned H.G. Wells, who suddenly appeared, Time Machine (patent pending) and all, in the Byrds' practice facility. After the initial shock wore off, McGuinn suggested that he and Wells find four girls, equip and rehearse them, and transport them forward in time to 1980. After sifting through hundreds of candidates, McGuinn and Wells settled on the perfect distaff rock & roll time travelers. As the girls, crammed with Wells into the tiny Time Machine, prepared to leave, McGuinn impulsively handed them his prize Rickenbacker twelve-string. Krrriiisshhhh. And the rest is inverted history.

It took years of deduction to piece the story together. I didn't know for sure until I saw and heard the Bangles in 1984 and got this eerie sensation. Their names were different, and so was their hair. But I knew these girls a long time ago. I don't have a single snapshot from those days, but it doesn't matter—I've got the records....

* * *

Bunny was the classic girl next door, but with a touch of Polish-Irish unpredictability. My sister Jo introduced us while I was home for the holidays at the tail end of '63. At that moment, "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "She Loves You" were drowning out the carolers, and Meet the Beatles was all they played at parties. Bunny would pick me up in her gold '64 Nova, and we'd race off, first to confession, then to the Plainfield-Edison Drive-In (we had it all backwards). When I got back to Notre Dame, I counted the days till Easter break while I wrote her name over and over in my notebook. My head was swimming in the works of the English romantics, from "The Eve of St. Agnes" to "All My Loving." Jamming change into the Farley Hall pay phone, I'd dial the long distance operator with my heart pounding like a Ringo drum roll. More in love, I guess, with the delirious ache I felt than with Bunny, I spent the rest of 1964 lapping up the good times ("If I Fell," "And I Love Her") and brooding through the bad times ("I'll Be Back," "No Reply," "You're Gonna Lose That Girl," "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away"). Once, in a frenzy of longing, I hitched the turnpikes home on a three-day weekend with a sign that read, "Notre Dame to Garden State Parkway," and a song, that endlessly repeated, "P.S., I Love You." But it was too late.

Carol was small, dark, sophisticated. Rain or shine, she kept the top down on her new white Triumph Spitfire (I liked her spirit). We'd zip down to the Jersey Shore with "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Laugh, Laugh," "It's the Same Old Song," and "You Were on My Mind" blowing in the wind. What a summer we had. Then, one muggy August night, sitting in the Spitfire outside a beachside restaurant with the Supremes sighing on WINS, I got the news: There was (drum roll) SOMEONE ELSE. Baby, baby, where did our love go?

Before I even had a chance to work up a good romantic lump in my throat, I met Denise at the Hofbrau, a Staten Island bar that served the underage Jersey crowd. As I first caught sight of her, "Like a Rolling Stone" came surging out of the jukebox. That was it for me. Denise was pretty in the skinny, lank-haired, distracted manner of the era. She looked angelic, but she was TROUBLE: Whenever we'd go out together, I'd have a slightly better than fifty-fifty shot of being the one she'd go home with. Strangely, I ate it up—thrived on demoralization (my own). And every time I got burned, there was a song on the radio to fit my melancholy: "Nowhere Man," "We Can Work It Out," "It's Only Love," "Reach Out I'll Be There," "The Last Time," "Workin' My Way Back to You," roughly in that order. Those songs made up the soundtrack for my personal version of The Agony and the Ecstasy.

One night in the fall of '66, Denise and I went with some friends to a frat party at Rutgers. (Bad move, you say? Right.) Someewhere in the din, I lost her—she just plain disappeared. As I searched through the rambling house, the sounds of rich harmonies cut through the noise. The frat brother in charge of playing the records was evidently enthralled with the first Mamas & Papas album, If You Can Believe Your Eyes and Ears (the one that has them all sitting in a bathtub). The song from that album that brings that helpless feeling back to me, like it just happened, is "Go Where You Wanna Go." The funny thing is, as I was driving home this afternoon to write this story, guess what they played on K-RTH? Yup.

I no longer clearly remember any of their faces, but I know I was wild about them. Because, every time I hear one of those songs, a moment comes rushing back. The point is, they just don't make records like those anymore....

* * *

The Bangles have seemingly airtight alibis for their whereabouts during the mid-Sixties, so, for the time being, let's forget the aforementioned revelations and go along with their version of the story. To hear them tell it, during that autumn nearly 20 years ago—the autumn I spent looking for my girlfriend—two very little girls who were 3000 miles and a full generation removed from me and my world were also listening to the Mamas & Papas. Sitting none too primly one day in the backseat of a '64 Buick station wagon as it coursed Reseda Boulevard, little Vicki Peterson and her kid sister Debbi quite spontaneously blended their voices for the very first time—to their mutual surprise and delight—as "Go Where You Wanna Go" played on the car radio. Harmony! In that moment of discovery, Vicki and Debbi somehow absorbed the magic of that music (to paraphrase John Sebastian), and became Bangles, though they didn't know any of that at the time.

Thus, we can trace the genesis of a band of young women who've managed, remarkably, to make the kinds of records they-just-don't-make-anymore, though many of their contemporaries have been trying, with considerably less success. That historical note doesn't explain how the Bangles do it, but it does suggest why. Take it from one who was there: Bangles records contain an ineffable element—something rich, rarefied, soulful, and sentimental—that I'd just about given up hope of hearing in any

piece of rock & roll I don't already know by heart. They do it with an easy understanding that they're simply too young to possess. They do it deftly and directly, with jangling guitars, and—most of all—with blended voices.

L.A. is full of neoclassic, Sixties-rooted bands (sometimes referred to less kindly as "retro-rock groups"), but none covers the bases with the comprehensiveness of the Bangles. Aside from their intricate, full-bodied harmonies, unmatched by any latterday band, the quartet's songs are remarkably succinct: You could easily fit their complete works—30-plus tunes in all—on a 90-minute cassette. Of the Bangles' contemporaries, only the Ramones and the Minutemen have consistently displayed this degree of concision. Just as tellingly, the Bangles tackle outside songs as enthusiastically and credibly as they do their own; creative covers are their specialty. Com-

plex harmonies, concision, covers—these are all-but-forgotten concepts that clearly deserve conservation. Because of these extremely rare qualities, the Bangles' two LPs, *All Over the Place* and *Different Light*, are fully capable of reawakening long-dormant sensibilities.

How did these four young women come to champion this unfashionable approach and make it seem so contemporary? According to the Bangles, it was a matter of genetics, deep-seated subliminal cues, and a nearly foolhardy determination. Crammed onto a couch in the office of their manager, Mike Gormley of L.A.P.D., on the eve of their departure for a European tour, the four Bangles recounted the various serendipitous factors that conspired to transport them from yesterday to today (if you can believe your eyes and ears):



All photos by Janet Van Ham

THE BANGLES (from left): Susanna Hoffs (guitar), Vicki Peterson (guitar), Debbi Peterson (drums), Michael Steele (bass); they all sing, natch.

MC: For someone who likes singing, your albums are a treasure, especially *Different Light*. It's significant that you do other people's songs as well as you do your own songs. That's a characteristic of the great Sixties bands. Your version of "Going Down to Liverpool," for instance, is much better than Katrina & the Waves' original. And you do [Jules Shear's] "If She Knew What She Wants" brilliantly.

SUSANNA HOFFS: As a singer, you never get tired of singing other people's songs. Other writers will write melodies that wouldn't necessarily come naturally to you. And that issues a real challenge. ["If She Knew What She Wants"] is a very strong song. [The key was] the moment when we made that Buffalo Springfield harmony. We were playing around with the harmonies and we discovered that weird modal thing. I looked at David Kahne and he looked at me, and we both went, "Uh-oh, this is scary." And then it was like, "Okay, we're gonna stay here till three in the morning and get this," because the resonance and everything was just like *happening*.

MICHAEL STEELE: It was like thirds, which sounded normal, and then fishing around for that other line.

MC: That happens a lot during recording sessions, doesn't it—fishing around for another line?

SUSANNA: No, no—not in Bangles recording sessions. . . . I guess we all have lists and lists of songs that we want to record someday. I've

always wanted to do "Boston," from the [Byrds'] *Preflyte* album. You can never run out of covers—there's a million great ones out there. I think it's a real essential part [of what we do].

DEBBI PETERSON: A good example on the last record [was the Merry-Go-Round's] "Live." That's a song I've been singing in the car [all my life]. So having a chance to put it on record was a big thrill.

MC (to Vicki and Debbi): *When I was a kid, my sister and I used to harmonize to Everly Brothers songs. And I had this fantasy of you two doing the same thing.*

VICKI PETERSON: Well, we actually have done that.

MC: *Your blend sounds genetically rooted.*

VICKI: There's a definite thing where Debbi and I'll be driving to our parents' house, and we'll start doing "Wake Up Little Susie," or (*spoken simultaneously with Debbi*) "You Were on My Mind."

MC: *I don't know how you've avoided cutting that one.*

VICKI: We've avoided it only because we love that song—that record—so much.

SUSANNA: Going back to that Everly Brothers/Everly Sisters thing, my brothers and I piddled around with music, but I was the only serious musician [in the family]. And I think the harmony thing worked out [because of] the genetics. Just like when you're Julian Lennon and John Lennon, the vocal cords are made out of the same genes. When we did "Getting Out of Hand" [the Bangs' first recording] for the first

time, singing along there, and then, all of a sudden, Debbi and Vicki sing this harmony thing, and this BIG BLOCK OF SOUND came in there, it just blew me away. It was such a weird chemical thing. We all blend differently, and we all switch off singing leads and harmonies, but they have a sense about harmony that was very new to me. On certain songs, Debbi finds these weird harmony parts, and Michael has a great ability to do that, too.

DEBBI: Driving around Los Angeles—here, you live in a car, basically—as kids, we'd always ride around in our 1964 station wagon Buick and sing along to the radio. And Vicki and I would start singing the same part, and then one of us would go down and the other would go up.

VICKI: Go to the third and then go to the high.

SUSANNA: See, I would never go for the harmony parts—they always did. It was amazing the way that became the signature thing, to use harmonies like that in this band. It hasn't been done in a long time.

VICKI: It's a very natural thing for us to do. When Debbi's singing a lead, Sue and Michael—

HOFFS: Susanna.

VICKI: *Susanna and Michael will come in to say, "Wait, wait! I hear this part—it's just there!"*

SUSANNA: I think we jump for, like if you wanna say, soprano, alto, mezzo, we tend to fall into those categories when we pick out parts; we tend to each have a different melody sense that will come out, because the harmonies are the lead parts of the songs a lot of times, or the



Vicki Peterson: "We're gonna be THE STONES tonight!"

hooks. We tend to naturally find our *spot* in that sense.

MC: You're too young to really have the experiential background in hearing this kind of music as you were growing up. Where did the desire to create or recreate this kind of music come from?

DEBBI: We all had older siblings.

MICHAEL: We were hearing this stuff, and were like babies, and I think it got into our subconscious. Besides that, I don't really know why it happened.

DEBBI: It just *happened*.

VICKI: When Debbi and I were toddlers, we lived in a house in the Valley that had an intercom system, and the radio was literally on 24 hours a day, and it was on KRLA or some Top-40 station.

MC: Were your parents unusually young?

VICKI: They were not that young, but they were just really into music. It was very important—it was part of life. It was part of the weekend to bring your radio out to the backyard if you had to help your dad pick weeds or something. I can still hear Mamas & Papas songs and think about summer days out in the backyard when I was six. It was very much a part of our consciousness at a young age.

MC: It was just there for you, then.

DEBBI: Environmental.

MC: So in a sense, it's probably even more deeply ingrained for you than it is for somebody my age.

VICKI: I think that's true, because we also were

too young to have any sense of cynicism, any sense of... *reality*; so we had these fantasies. I remember thinking that when I heard Sonny & Cher on the radio, that they were at the radio station singing over the microphone. I had this fantasy that every time I heard that song, they were there! And so it was very personal.

MC: Can you recount the series of quirks, revelations, and coincidences that led you from Point A to where you are now?

VICKI: I guess it started out in three separate places in the Los Angeles. Michael was doing her thing [in Elton Duck], Susanna was doing her thing, and Debbi and I were in a band. We were looking for another guitarist, Susanna was looking for a band—something to do—cuz she'd never really been in a band before. The three of us connected through [a classified ad] in the *Recycler*, where you have to sift through 80 percent total freaks before you find anything relatively human. That's why the odds are so amazing that we actually did find something that clicked. There were certain references [in the ad] to "Beatles, Byrds, and Buffalo Springfield," that [juiced us in]. We talked over the phone—it was right after John Lennon was assassinated. We spoke for hours and hours over the phone, realizing that we *had* to get together. It was actually January, '81. Tragedies always bring people together, and it did. We just met, exchanged tapes, and realized that there was a very strong common denominator here, a very strong affection for the same type of music, and the same goals. We'd sit there and say, "Are you crazy



Debbi Peterson: "They were checkin' our guts, I'll tell ya."

enough to wanna do this all the way? Are you serious about this?" I mean, you feel stupid saying, "Do you wanna be a Number-One group?" It sounds like such a ridiculous thing.

MICHAEL: Do you wanna be a rock & roll star?

VICKI: Yeah. And she said yes and we said yes, and we went on from there. And I think the thing that kept us going was that we always kept an eye on what *we* wanted to do, no matter what outside people were trying to inject. Everything we did, it really was a stepladder. We had short-term goals and long-term goals. The long-term goal was a *ridiculous* goal, and the short-term goals were "making the record" and "playing the 'Whisky,'" "getting played on Rodney," "getting mentioned in the *Music Connection*." Whatever it was, it was very localized and important to us.

MC: Without those short-term goals, it would've been just absurd.

VICKI: Oh, no, you can't do it. So, after we had done our Down Kitty single, "Gettin' Out of Hand"—

DEBBI: We had our own personal label.

VICKI: —we became involved with [Miles Copeland's now-defunct] Faulty Products, which was distributing it at the time. We signed up with L.A.P.D., Miles Copeland's [management] company, recorded the EP in basically 24 hours, with a tiny little budget, with Craig Leon. So it was originally a Faulty Record—it was a faulty record all around. We got a lot of college play around the country. We went on the road with the English Beat, which was a real experience,



Susanna Hoffs: Somehow Prince knew about the electric-yellow-sunshine sound.

THE FACTOR

BY PHILIP KUBICKI



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cuz we were *not ready* to do anything like that.

DEBBI: It was definitely sink-or-swim.

MC: Was it traumatizing?

VICKI: In some ways it really was. We were so tough. We knew a band like that has an audience that's intensely loyal, and you go out for an audience, and they go, "Who the hell is this? Get off the stage!"

DEBBI: "Who are these dumb girls?"

VICKI: "A buncha chicks," you know, "we never hearda you." Half the time, because of the way the thing was promoted, we were not even on the bill. So it was a very tough tour.

DEBBI: Character-building.

MC: Michael Cooper of the Lakers calls that a "gut check."

DEBBI: They were checkin' our guts. I'll tell ya. Checkin' our guts to the door.

VICKI: We came back from that tour, and I remember sitting in the kitchen table with [the Dream Syndicate's] Steve Wynn, and he said, "How was it?" And I sat there for about three seconds... and then I burst into tears. That was the first time—the entire time I'd been thinking about—

DEBBI: The whole tour she was TOUGH.

VICKI: The entire time, I was like, "Awright, let's go! We're gonna go out there tonight and we're gonna be THE STONES tonight!" Or "We're the Ramones tonight!"

DEBBI: It was like being thrown to the lions.

MC: So you found management. Did they explain to you what appealed to them about the Bangs/Bangles?

VICKI: The first meeting we had with Miles Copeland and Mike Gornley, we were very defensive. "They just want the poor man's Go-Go's. They want us to take up all the little crumbs that the Go-Go's don't want anymore. We're not gonna be on I.R.S." So we had this meeting, and we said, "Okay, so whaddaya think you can do for us? [Copeland had] seen us at the Cathay de

Grande on a night when we all had colds, and he really liked us, something about the band, probably our froggy sound. I think he liked the energy—anyway, he saw something there. I don't know what. We met him afterwards and we were saying, "Who's this?" "I guess he manages the Police or something." "Buy me a beer and we'll talk." We were not really that impressed, but when we sat down and talked to him, we realized the way he wanted to do things was to take it very slowly, to really give the band a chance to do a little bit of growing, which, God knows, we needed—and still do. And not



Michael Steele. "You have to be ready NOW."

go out there and spend a ton of money that we were gonna owe for the rest of our lives, so that really worked in with how we wanted to do things.

MC: It sounds like you were spared the travails that most aspiring bands have to endure—shopping your demo tape around, trying to get in some doors, questioning your worth. The A&R hustle tends to make you primarily concerned not with your creative growth but with getting a deal.

DEBBI: It tends to make people compromise; they often go overboard in the compromise department, and they lose their style and they lose their sound. That's sorta sad.

MICHAEL: Yeah, in the old days, it seemed like you could do like five records and develop it, and they'd still keep you on the label. Nowadays, it's like Mr. Mister—you have to be ready NOW.

VICKI: I can't imagine us sitting around listening to the radio and saying, "Now, what is current? What is contemporary? What is gonna be a hit?" And "Let's do that!" We didn't really care about getting the political major deal. We knew that we were still learning and growing; it would've been disastrous.

SUSANNA: Not only that, but we came out at a time that was very conducive to going and getting a street reputation in the clubs. A scene just sort of blossomed that spring—82, I guess. We were just happy to play the Whisky a Go Go.

MICHAEL: Best club in the world.

MC: Great sound, too—except for that one table underneath where all the industry guys sat, ironically enough.

SUSANNA: I think we would've made it happen, even if [things had been different]. Everyone was very into doing their own little indie projects, starting their own little labels, managing themselves, being very entrepreneurial about it all. It was like a group of people who had all worked at record stores starting bands.

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Photo by Janet Van Ham

"You feel stupid saying, 'Do you wanna be a Number-One group?'"

MC: How did the deal with Columbia come about? Did you let L.A.P.D. do it?

VICKI: Even though there were several labels that were sort of nibbling, we didn't really get involved in that at all. The thing that impressed us was that the A&R people from Columbia were showing up at the shows; we were getting some kind of relationship with Peter Philbin, and Ron Oberman. Peter was great. Of course, we've lost him now [to Elektra].

MICHAEL: Peter Philbin is still very supportive of us. He's gotten us through some rough times. He's really a music lover.

MC: It's nice to know there are class people here and there in the biz. Anyway, now that we're up-to-date, let's talk about the new album. It struck me that there's a slight drop-off in original material on Different Light, although the covers make up for it. Most significantly, though, there's no "Hero Takes a Fall."

SUSANNA: There isn't. Vicki and I were feeling like we wanted the rock thing—it was really important. Actually, I started "Walkin' Down Your Street" with that nonstop "Hero" beat in mind, and it had this really cool guitar riff. I don't know what happened—somehow, it became more R&B along the way—but, originally, it had a Rolling Stones-meet-the-Supremes [feel].

MC: Your most daring cover choice so far is [Big Star's classic] "September Gurls."

MICHAEL: I'll say. The performance—not only the song, but the performance—on that record is [amazing]. I mean, we keep picking these impossible covers, and some of them work and some of them don't. Until I opened my mouth, I had no idea of how it was gonna sound like, cuz we hadn't done it live, and it was the first time I had sung a lead on a record in my life. What a great thing to pick for your first vocal! It was either sink or swim, and I think we're all real happy about how it turned out.

SUSANNA: [Alex Chilton] has such an instinctive feel. When he plays, the emotions are just...

there's a certain rhythm. We saw him live recently, and it's like it's coming from within—intense. The way he plays guitar, it's like hysterical, almost. It's like those old McGuinn solos, with that staccato—

MICHAEL: The guitar sound just hits you in the face—there's such an immediacy to it. When they mixed it they didn't go, "Gee, that's a little up-front, isn't it?" They just did it. There's a very drug-like vibe to those performances; it's loose, but somehow it stays a cohesive unit.

SUSANNA: Cranking-the-VU-meters sound. The yellow—the yellow-guitar sound. When we went to do our first single, we wanted that guitar sound. We went over to Emitt Rhodes' studio and said, "We want the VU meter to crack with like this electric-sunshine-yellow sound—this Sixties guitar sound." It's funny, cuz I got a yellow birthday cake in the shape of a guitar from Prince for my birthday, and Debbi was saying, "Is that what you mean by 'yellow guitar?'" I said, "No, I was thinking in more cosmic/psychedelic terms here."

MC: Who plays the keyboards on "Manic Monday?"

MICHAEL: That's Mitchell Froom, and David Kahne played on some of it.

MC: I understand that Rusty Anderson [of Living Daylights] and Kahne played some of the guitars on the album.

VICKI: Um-hmm.

MICHAEL: David played air guitar throughout the entire album.

VICKI: He was the lead air guitarist.

MC: The big difference between your earlier records and the new one is the guitars are huge through a lot of Different Light.

VICKI: We did a lot of 'em. We did a lot of doubling guitars, a lot of layering of different sounds.

MICHAEL: What's cool about Rusty is, he's not so much one of these million-notes-a-minute guys; he's really into getting a great sound and he's thinking of great, strange ideas. It's not like,

"Let's get a session guy."

VICKI: No, not at all. He's a friend of ours, and we just brought him in because he has some sounds that we didn't have.

MICHAEL: Yeah, he understands hearing the song as a song, and thinking, what is the thing that'll fit in here, and make this bright and colorful? As opposed to the Yngwie school.

MC: We've talked a lot about your influences. Do you have any specifically female points of reference?

SUSANNA: We were all weaned on Joni Mitchell—you know, that fluty high stuff, the trills and the embellishments are something we've incorporated, like on "Let It Go."

MC: That's your strongest original on the new album.

MICHAEL: Very organic.

SUSANNA: That was gonna be a B-side, and we always felt like David Kahne didn't want us to do too much folked-out, Joni Mitchell, EWewewewew stuff.

MICHAEL: He's trying to break the parts up instead of having us singing in blocks of harmonies.

SUSANNA: But we just went all out. We said, "You're gonna die when you hear this song—it's like folk-to-the-max."

VICKI: We didn't even tell him what the song was before we recorded it. We knew so much he was gonna hate it that we said, "David, pretend like this is a Mike Curb Congregation session and you're just getting paid a lot of money for this—you don't care what it sounds like, okay? It's just the B-side of the single, just get in the room—we're gonna do the song!" And we didn't let him have anything to do with it.

SUSANNA: There's rollercoaster trills going all over, which, for us, is like [the ultimate].

MC: The vocal ensemble seems so organic on that track that it's almost like an aural relay—the baton gets passed along the line. And you don't even think about who's singing what parts. It's like those old Beatles records and Byrds records—at the time, nobody tried to figure out who was singing what; it was as if it was all coming out of the same head.

SUSANNA: That's the most.

MICHAEL: It's a gnarly blend.

DEBBI: It's the Big Bang Theory....

Aba! A clue. I never let on that I knew their secret—they would've just denied everything anyway. I mean, they said they were going to Europe, but who knows? Then there's the rumor about this parallel universe, and some prepubescent all-girl group from "New Jersey" who call themselves "The Bangs," but nobody's talking. Oh, did I mention that "Kahne" is a coded anagram for "Wells"? If you don't believe it, play "Manic Monday" backwards.

Anyway, then there was Monica, who used to come to the pool where I was a lifeguard. She drove her parents' '64 Buick wagon, and she had a thing about Jim McGuinn... ■

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CLOSE READING: Different Light, Coup or Compromise?

With *Different Light*, their second album and third actual recording, the Bangles have sacrificed much of the slumber-party intimacy that animated their earlier work for a more refined, and consequently more distant, approach. They've grown up. You can even see it in the pictures on the cover—each of the four members is shown in a series of very posed poses. Nothing shown comes close to the giggles and cut-ups of their first EP. Of course, growing up is hardly a bad thing—everyone grows up and gets serious eventually. Unfortunately, though, the new music reflects very little of the maturity and sophistication the new Bangles are trying to project.

The songs themselves are not bad. In the right mood, *Different Light* can be a very enjoyable record. The four cover tunes are particularly well-chosen: Prince's "Manic Monday" is both a melodic and lyrical treat that belies the wistful reluctance of rising to work on Monday mornings; Jules Shear's "If She Knew What She Wants" is sung in third-person to avoid a gender problem, but actually becomes more compelling than the original by observing the comic absurdity of an all-too-common relationship doomed to last forever; Alex Chilton's "September Gurls" and Liam Sternberg's "Walk Like an Egyptian" possess punch and unorthodox perspectives. The covers are so strong that the original songs seem to wane by comparison. Oh, they're not bad—they just suffer from the lack of distinctive hooks and lyric precision, which causes them to sound tired even on first listen. This is where the lack of personal stamp is glaring, because the Bangles have written with plenty of boldness in the past, but it's all very tentative and predictable here. No magic, no personality. Check out these lines from the first LP's "Dover Beach":

*If we had the time
I would run away with you
To a perfect world
We'd suspend all that was duty or required*

*Late last night you cried
And I couldn't come to you
But on the other side
You and I inseparable and walking*

It goes on in much the same fashion—dreamy, deeply personal, visual, evocative, and idealistic, but also pragmatic—all written with confidence against a backdrop of gorgeously flowing music. Now compare the above lines with this verse from *Different Light*'s "Not Like You":

*How could you do it
It's not like you
To be the one to lose
Why did you do it
It's not like you
But I'll be around for you*

Do what? Lose what? Why stick around? Again, the rest of the song is like this—all nebulous clichés that tell the listener nothing. The writers of this song probably know what it's about, but the listeners certainly don't. So why bother to write it, record it, and sell it to people if it's only an inside joke? Fill us in, too—that's what lyrics are for.

Musically, the originals suffer from the same disease—no real sure-handed strokes. "Standing in the Hallway" is cute, "Walking Down Your Street" is borderline catchy, but that's about it.

The lone exception to this disappointing scenario is Michael Steele's "Following," a dark, intimate acoustic piece that commands attention—and holds it—via a convincing vocal performance. Steele, in fact, is the surprise of the record, as she contrasts this stark piece with the shimmering "September Gurls," and all this without ever having sung lead on record before.

The "star" performances, however, are unquestionably Susanna Hoffs. Her thin, toyish alto is so bouncy and tingly, it adds much of the luster to "...Monday" and "If She Knew..." the "single" cuts that open each side. Aside from that, though, not even the beautifully textured lead and backing voices can save the bulk of the songs from blandness. David Kahne's meticulous production adds an impressive degree of aural depth to the record; unfortunately, aural depth is not the same as human depth—and ultimately, there is no getting around the lack of that here.

The Bangles have made, by most standards, a good second album. With the right promotion, it could sell bundles and break them as national chart-makers. But even if that happens, I can't help hoping that they realize they could have done much, much better. It is good to try to expose your music to more and more people, but it is terrible to sacrifice or compromise the best of your talents and personalities to do so.

—John Bizer

For another view of the LP, see page 36.

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PRODUCER PROFILE

David Kahne on the Making of *Different Light*

by John Bitzer

With *Different Light*, David Kahne has now produced both Bangles albums, and this experience of working with the same band twice seems to have enabled him to develop his skills more fully. After spending the first album getting to know the band, he has now grown up with them, and consequently, his contributions to the new record are that much more substantial. He constructed a vast array of sounds to accompany each song's melody; he arranged all of the vocal parts—including solo, counterpoint, and chordal elements—played guitar and keyboards on many of the tracks, selected two of the cover tunes, and even helped write a couple of the original songs. Although Kahne admits all this reluctantly, he will talk about how he came to make *Different Light* sound so much bigger than its predecessor, and how he used his particular arranging skills to achieve this sound.

MC: There are four cover tunes on the album. Did you feel there was a need for strong outside material, perhaps because the new original material was weaker than usual?

Kahne: No. It was broader. There's nothing like "Hero Takes a Fall," but I felt songs like "Return Post" and "In a Different Light" were as good as any. I like all the songs a lot, which is unusual—I normally wouldn't listen to a record I worked on, because by the time you get out of the studio you've heard it so many times. But the outside material was chosen to provide a balance. I was thinking of having a wide variety of rhythmic feels first of all—I thought the first record had too many "cowbeat" songs like "Tell Me" and "All About You." Also, second albums tend to sound down—you get a lot of songs that didn't make the first record.

MC: You have all your life to write songs for the first one, but only a matter of months to come up with quality material for the second one.

Kahne: Right. And you're also self-conscious and nervous, because people have something to compare you to. So I wanted to make sure there was enough breadth of style in the record without going against the grain of the band, which is their vocal style. We wanted to make sure the vocals got the best setting they could, and decided anything outside of the vocals that we needed to do to get the variety of feel and texture that we wanted would be the course to take.

MC: This included not only outside material, but outside musicians, as well?

Kahne: Yeah, we decided on that together. I played guitar and keyboards, Rusty Anderson [from the Living Daylights] played guitar, Mitchell Froom played guitar, and Carlos Vega played some drums. Because their vocals tend to create a continuity from song to song, you need a broader contrast of tonal instrumentation to complement that vocal sound. So when they couldn't think of something to do, I would play it, and when

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I couldn't think of something to do, I'd get somebody to help. Rusty played the twelve-string solo in "September Gurls" because it was something Vicki wouldn't normally do, and it had that cool, sitar-like sound to it. And there are a couple of shuffles on the record, like "Return Post," where Debbi played some drums, but that's such a specialized swing feel that we decided to bring in Carlos.

MC: Did you have to concentrate just as closely on the arrangements of the instrumental accompaniment as on its tone?

Kahne: Oh, yeah. The accompaniment is a contrast to the melody line, but it can't be a direct contrast, like counterpoint. I think arranging the accompaniment is the hardest thing to do. Most people don't pay a lot of attention to how much different an inversion of a chord can make, compared to the melody. Like taking a four-note chord and only using two notes in the vocal part. There's only a few elements that you deal with, but you come to appreciate the vocal so much more after working with the instruments in just the right way.

MC: I know you can often get a significant effect in vocals, too, just by raising the key of the song. Did you make any adjustments like that?

Kahne: Sure. I think when a singer really strains to sing a fifth, for instance, you can really get a lift out of it. To me it's all trying to create a sense of dynamics within the band's ability to perform. I even lowered the keys—sometimes the lowest note is your most effective and emotional. There's a couple of notes in "If She Knew What She

Wants" where Susanna goes way down. I think a lot of the best pop music is created when artists are on the edge of their techniques—there's something exciting about that. If you don't capture that, you've usually got a pretty dull record.

MC: And yet Different Light sounds so refined. Did you feel there was enough spontaneity on this record?

Kahne: I always think spontaneity is the best element of a record, but a lot of artists are spontaneous through the entire record, so they give exactly the same impression on every song. If every time you're spontaneous, you go to the same place, you've got a boring record, too. To be really spontaneous, you have to be an excellent technician and have a lot of self-control, because control is the other half of it. Like a drummer—a lot of

drummers only play well fast. You take the tempo down a couple of beats per minute, and they start to drag and lose their feel. It might take the best drummers a year to be able to play a groove consistently another three beats per minute. So it takes a lot of control to get to the point where they can slip into any groove at any speed quickly and consistently—to be truly spontaneous. Now, what the Bangles do spontaneously is go out and sing together without even thinking about it, and when they sing a chord it resonates. Of all the bands I've worked with, the Bangles have more raw tone than any of them. And it's something that's unreplicated by any of the four of their voices. That's the type of spontaneity we tried to capture—and control—on this record.

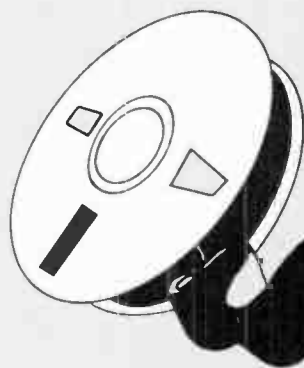
MC: One last thing: There was some publicity when the last album came out about conflicts that occurred in the studio between you and the band. Did things go smoothly this time, now that you know each other better?

Kahne: There are always huge conflicts, but I think the overall feeling is that it was a great experience. Anytime you work with performers who try to do something they've never done before, there will be conflicts. There's always performance anxiety, fear—it takes a lot of courage to make a record, if they're serious about it. Because they're always going to face themselves, and the producer is usually the one who is bringing up the conflict. But, again, overall it was very positive.

MC: So you'd work with them again?

Kahne: If they want me to. I don't know if they want me to. ■

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The music business. Music. Business. Sometimes it seems like the two should have nothing to do with one another. Sometimes they seem inextricably linked, like in rock & roll. If you've toiled in the record industry for more than a decade and have neither completely sold out nor become totally inured to its inequities, you're lucky. You've bought The Dream. Usually, it's someone else's, or, if you've been particularly successful, you've made it your own.

The world of pop music has attracted its share of pie-in-the-sky visionaries who have delivered on their lofty ambitions: from Sam Phillips, Ahmet Ertegun and Phil Spector through Berry Gordy and Chris Blackwell to Greg Ginn, Chuck Dukowski, Bob Biggs, and Bill Hein. The independent label is the cornerstone for the development of rock, and continues to provide an alternative to the hype-laden pop-40 status quo. Today, labels like SST, Enigma, Twin Tone, Bigtime, Coyote, and countless others form a minor-league-network proving ground for showcasing acts to the majors, with college radio, the club circuit, and fanzines as its alternative media backdrop. Once every ten years or so, the activity surfaces with enough visibility to be categorized as a *movement*. The rest of the time, like right now, for instance, the survival-of-the-fittest competition takes place in underground anonymity, with only the most committed fans paying attention.

I broke into the music business in 1976, carried along on the new wave of N.Y. bands, led by Patti Smith, Television, Talking Heads, and Ramones, taking place at the clubs like CBGB's and Max's, while being written about in publications such as the *New York Rocker* and *Punk*. I was the publicist briefly for ORK Records, the label for Television's seminal "Little Johnny Jewel" and Richard Hell's anthem, "Blank Generation," until that company self-destructed on the eve of a PhonoGram/U.K. distribution deal. Then, it was on to my first paying gig, with one-time New York Dolls manager Marty Thau's Red Star Records, home of Suicide, Boston's Real Kids, and the Fleshtones, where my title was "minister of information" back in those polemical times.

I bought that dream, taking it to the streets in guerilla fashion to battle the rock establishment's punk boycott in the name of the new wave. All the while trying to sell a few records, utilizing a suddenly revitalized indie distribution system, which was supposedly geared to reach a burgeoning network of alternative record shops. Of course, ten years after, only the strongest (and most clever) have managed to survive; the rest, from Stiff and Sire to Slash, stayed alive by making deals with majors.

I made my own arrangements with the big boys, going on to work for PolyGram Records, Warner Amex (MTV), and Viacom (Showtime/The Movie Channel), but I don't think I've abandoned my ideals. No sirree. I just like to

eat. Anyway, I've seen the world from both sides now. And, believe me, there's no moral advantage in being independent. And, while, for instance, the Cult's careerism might be a bit too much to take, I can't argue with Ian Astbury when he tells me, "At the end of the day, an independent wants to make money just like a major record company." Megalomania and rip-offs are even more likely to occur at small labels, since power is often invested in a single individual. Nelson George's *Where Did Our Love Go?* describes how Berry Gordy's Motown dream of providing a musical home for the disenfranchised black musician turned into a nightmare under his one-man rule.

Still, as long as popular music requires a steady diet of innovative new artists and seers, there will be a place for the independent label. Unfortunately, these multinational-entertainment-conglomerate, yuppie times have never seemed bleaker for those American mavericks who choose to go *against* the grain. SST has lost Husker Du to Warners, and the Minutemen to D. Boon's tragic death. Twin Tone has had to let go of the Replacements, while picking up perennial outsider Jonathan Richman and

Illustration by Ron Fritcher



promising Hoboken label Coyote. Slash looks in disarray, with its Warners distribution pact reportedly in jeopardy. The only U.S. indies that continue to thrive are those that cater to specific, well-defined markets, like Profile, Windham Hill, and Tommy Boy (and the latter two are distributed, respectively, by A&M and Warners).

The rise of independent labels can always be tied to a corresponding street-music phenomenon, be it rhythm & blues, rockabilly, Brill Building pop, the British Invasion, disco, punk, or rap. It's all a matter of being able to react to a rapidly changing marketplace, to instantaneously package a subcult scene for mass consumption. And surely, it's only natural for a label serving a small clientele to want to sell to a larger one. That's called economic growth.

Still, social critics decry rock & roll for its all-or-nothing financial formula. We wonder why pop musicians must be either fabulously wealthy or unable to make a living. We want to know why it's impossible for a rocker to earn a decent, middle-class wage, whatever that might be in these inflation-ridden times. . . .

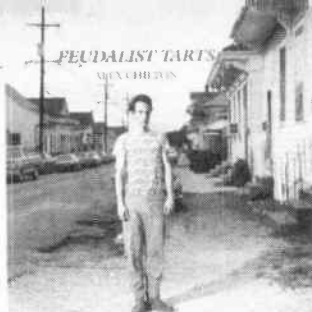
Quite simply, the rewards are so great because the risks are that much greater. As British writer Simon Frith points out, rock & roll is endemic to a capitalist society. The tyrannical "laissez-faire" of the pop charts (with its historical "openness" to major label "influence") reflects the vicious Darwinian world of rock & roll, where otherwise-sane men are driven to bite the head off a dove to draw attention to their work. Or dress like androgynous choirboys, greasepaint-stained clowns, working class heroes. . . next thing you know, they'll be slicing off their own ears. . . .

The Dream? That music is created from the spontaneity of inspiration, unsullied by thoughts of recompense. The Reality? Rock & roll is a winner-take-all rat race for the attentions of a thrill-hungry, fickle, teenybopper audience, hardened by video satiation. The Compromise? There's no business like show business, even if you have to follow the elephant around with a shovel and a scoop. The Dream may be over, but there's an awful lot of reality out there still to experience. This crazy industry needs all the enlightened prophets (profits?) that can fit. If you dare, the niche is there.

Living out West after growing up in New York has tuned me into this country's pioneering frontier spirit, that anti-establishment bias which invites one to "do-it-yourself." Like early Hollywood itself, the music business has always attracted an eclectic hand of trailblazers. It's up to subsequent generations to keep that initial impulse alive in an industry increasingly overrun by lawyers and accountants. From Sun Records to Homestead, the independent label has been the key to rock & roll's continued artistic, and financial, development. As Patti Smith once put it, "We created it. Let's take it over." Or start a new one. . . . ■



Offbeat artists, Aussie and domestic alike, pepper the Bigtime roster.



than being an independent. There is a lot of aggravation, but it is all worth it. You're your own boss, you do what you want the way you want, and I think a lot of the bands we sign tend to appreciate that."

Though his plans for a distribution deal are on the back burner for the moment, Bestall is looking across the Atlantic to expand the Bigtime name in other alternative markets. He explains his next move enthusiastically: "We're just in the process of setting up Bigtime in the U.K. through an independent company called Making Waves. The reason for this move is that we have a lot of product out of here and Australia, so with an office in London, we'll basically have the three major markets covered." Part of this formula includes the signings of acts from England for the Bigtime roster. Bigtime has secured long-time worldwide deals with the Jazz Butcher, the Folk Devils, and the Scientists. He has also obtained MicroDisney for the U.S. and Canada.

These bands, like all of the Bigtime constituents, are of an alternative mind and spirit. Bestall claims these qualities are prerequisites to becoming part of the organization: "It's something we really look into—the lyric content and the style of the group, it's very impor-

tant. You know, we've sort of been there and done it on the bland side of the business," he admits.

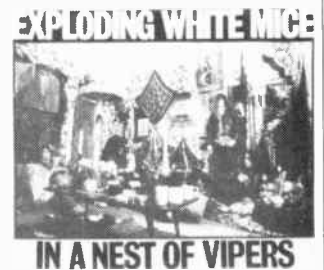
"I think there is a vibrancy [in the indie scene], and it's not jaded or tired yet. One of the things that has made us come so far in such a short time is that we did nine albums in nine months of operation in Los Angeles. Now we've got more records being offered than we can deal with. The next step for us is to learn the market even better and get our products in more stores and to motivate our distributors."

Go get 'em, Freddie. ■

Photo by Janet Van Ham



Bestall's made the transition from Air Supply to the Beasts of Bourbon quite smoothly.



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Sounds Good Has a Suite Beat

by William Clodfelter

The biggest problem facing independent labels—new and established alike—is adequate placement and distribution of their product. If records aren't in stores, how can they sell? Sure, many labels have become successful through placing ads in fanzines and selling their product by mail order, but how do you reach the majority of listeners who don't read fanzines? Face it, there's only a limited number of local ma & pa stores that will take records on consignment. Of course, you might decide to take the path of those determined souls who pack up their compact autos and trek the parameters of the West or East Coasts, hopefully placing three-to-five records in numerous little stores along the way. The unforeseen nightmare, however, comes about when one realizes the impossibility of really knowing thereafter what's happening with the records:

How do you keep tabs on records sold, and how do you collect on them? How do you know your product is properly placed so that consumers will see it? How do you service stores with *more* records? How much money and time do you have to spend on phone calls just to retail outlets? Finally, how do you break into the bastions of the Towers and the Warehouses, those major chains that can really move your product?

And even if you've secured a so-called "distribution deal," what guarantees that your records will ever actually move from your distributor's warehouse floor? What guarantees punctual payment or sometimes even payment at all? The fact is, distribution can be a real headache—no kidding.

Consequently, we set out to shed some light on the perplexing world of distribution by profiling Hawthorne-based Sounds Good, an organization that in less than five years has grown from one of six entities crammed into Rhino's old cavernous warehouse to one of the largest independent distributors in the nation.

Ask Bob Marin, managing director of Sounds Good, what makes his company successful. He'll pause. Collect his thoughts and, like a computer spewing out stored matter, he'll

reply, "I think we have very intelligent sales people. I think we have spectacular fill. We have a good name within the business. There's no games being played. We pay well. We try to have an extremely open and honest relationship with everyone we deal with." STOP! He pounds the nail smack on the head. "Open and honest communication" is the key element supporting the success of his business. "Communication is a crazy word," explains Marin. "People will say, 'Yeah, you have to talk communication,' but it goes much deeper to follow through. We can't hammer it into our sales people enough. It goes hand-in-hand with the product we service, the product we're delivering, with the signing of a group or with a label we distribute. We deal on realistic terms. We need to know what we are going to sell and what the applications are."

The main thing the people at Sounds Good want to avoid is misrepresentation. This is why communication plays such a vital role in the daily operations at Sounds Good. Too often, inexperienced labels come in with unrealistic ideas about their product. The fact is, the glamor and financial rewards don't come easily. Bonnie Levetin, Sounds Good's special projects director, says the most frequent thing she hears today from disillusioned [labels] is, "They said they'd get our video on MTV." Levetin stresses that Sounds Good refrains from making promises that it can't keep. "We lay it out, saying, 'This is where our strengths are; this is possibly where our weaknesses are; this is what we can do for you.' If it doesn't make sense to us, then we'll pass, because we're not in the business just to have the most labels here or the most quantity to distribute."

It should be noted that heavy metal is *not* one of Sounds Good's fortes. As Levetin relates, when most distributors began to capitalize on the heavy metal market, Sounds Good decided to keep its distance. This was not because the company felt the music lacked credibility; on the contrary, both Levetin and Marin felt that no one within the company really *understood* heavy metal. Obviously, if they didn't *get* it, they couldn't effectively *push* it. "We *do* know good

high-energy dance music," Levetin points out. (Sounds Good was importing the Eurythmics, Duran Duran, and the like long before any of these bands had domestic licensing deals.) "Same thing is true with 'new music,' whether it be industrial or punk or any other versions of it. With these forms of music, we have someone here who can say, 'This is good; this isn't. Yeah, I know we can move this in X territory,' and so forth."

With the establishment of Suite Beat Music Group, Sounds Good's in-house label, bands and small labels have virtually unlimited distribution options. "A distribution deal can be anything that is negotiated," Marin explains. With Sounds Good, he adds, you don't even have to come in with finished product. "Come in with a guitar and sing. If we think it's great, we'll do a deal through Suite Beat and distribute it through Sounds Good."

Deals are based on the particular wants, needs, strengths, and weaknesses of the client. "If you're looking for something, you should speak up for it," Levetin stresses. "Ask for it and get your answers down, so that two months down the line, when you're getting what you signed for, it's what you had in mind."

"We want to make sure that there's a total trust [on both sides] for what the label has to give and what it wants in us," Marin says. "We'll give the advertisement. We'll give co-op bucks. We'll give whatever they need because, again, we're growing and learning what it takes to move a decent quantity."

All promotion the distributor performs, explains Levetin, is usually done in conjunction with the label. "We do a lot of promotion to our accounts, and we have mailers going out to retailers, often with displays. We do whatever we can. Therefore, the more together a label is, the more of an edge they can give to their own product." With some of the bigger, more established independent labels like Frontier, Twin Tone, or SST, for instance, Sounds Good only does co-op ads. When bands signed to this type of label perform in certain areas, the distributor will hook them up with its accounts,

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Sounds Good and Suite Beat try to stay ahead of the trends with records such as these, from their latest release.



and as a result, they'll be high-profiled in both the press and retail outlets.

With smaller labels like the San Francisco-based Deadbeat Records, which released Yo's *Charm World*, Sounds Good often does exclusive deals. In the case of this particular record, the distributor not only had exclusive distribution rights, but also performed all the promotional duties involved. Even within Sounds Good's new Suite Beat label, deals take a variety of forms. With an abundance of deals in association with smaller labels, the Suite Beat Music Group is burgeoning with new music. December saw the most recent efforts of the New Marines and eight previously unreleased cuts from the Birthday Party. Suite Beat's January/February releases are works from Bill Nelson's Red Noise, Savage Republic, the Seeing Eye Gods, and Spaghetti Western.

Sounds Good's perpetual growth can be attributed to the importance it places on longevity as opposed to volatile trends. "The music industry is so fickle," proclaims Marin. "The idea is to look ahead and foresee what's going to be cool in a year or two and not be so set in your ways as to feel that something that's current is all there is. If you think that way, you're already digging your grave."

"Three years ago, 'new age' music wasn't really heard of," continues Levetin. "I don't even think the term was used. Now, there's a lot of new age happening. Same is true with the [psychedelic] stuff. Five years ago, nobody would have signed a garage-psyche band if their life depended on it. Just a few weeks ago, [the *L.A. Times* Sunday] Calendar came out with the top Australian psyche bands, and it included our band, the Olympic Sideburns. Every one of these bands has American deals.

Thus, instead of following trends, Sounds Good prefers to pioneer them. The company currently is one of the largest compact disc distributors in the country. Marin says that CDs are one of the things they've taken on at an embryonic stage and plan to grow with. "Give it a few more years and every household, every single college kid, will have a CD player instead of a phonograph."

Sounds Good's greater-than-the-moment posture is also depicted by its purchases of old catalogs. The company recently purchased the worldwide rights to re-release the Vee-Jay catalog, which includes a lot of old jazz and rhythm & blues. "It's really great," Marin enthuses. "We're putting out some CDs in addition to the LPs that haven't been seen for

20, 25 years. With CDs, it's going to be spectacular."

Foreign licensing will also play a major role in Sounds Good's 1986 agenda. At the time of our interview, both Marin and Levetin, along with some of their key buyers, were just about to fly to Cannes, France, to take part in MIDEM, the largest convention for importer/exporters in the world. Marin says foreign licensing is important to distributors because they are all playing the game of exclusives. "It's not a war," assures Marin. "I think competition is extremely healthy. On the whole, everyone is trying to get the best band or the best entities out there to put on their label, so they'll know there's a certain amount of income that's completely theirs."

Sounds Good is one of a number of larger independent distributors around the United States—others are Important, Rough Trade, Jem, Dutch East India, Caroline, Greenworld, and C.R.D. Each has its particular area of emphasis and territorial strength. Because independents rely a lot more on educated intelligence than fat budgets, it is extremely important to keep informed, to be realistic about your product, and to use every means of possible exposure, whether conventional or creative. ■

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The MC Guide to the '86 Indie Scene

The four interrelated guides below represent a mere sampling of the independent music sector in Southern California; i.e., it should not be construed as comprehensive, although it does contain the bulk of the region's larger and more visible indie companies. We've eliminated those labels and firms associated with the majors (Rhino and Slash, for example) in order to focus exclusively on the wholly independent folks in our neck of the woods. The addresses of certain seemingly reputable indie labels were found to be mere mail drops without listed phone numbers; the absence of hard info naturally caused us to move on to the next name on the list. These listings should not in any way be construed as endorsements, obviously; and we assume the information provided by the following purveyors of goods, services, and airplay to be correct.

Compiled by Chris Stevens

SELECTED INDIE LABELS

ALLEGIANCE/TAKOMA RECORDS

7525 Fountain
Hollywood, CA 90046
(213) 851-8852
Roster: Patti Beard, Frankie Kelly, Ronnie Baron
Contact: Scott Bergstein (head of A&R)
Style: Black/dance
Distribution: Indie

ALLIED ARTISTS RECORDS

10020 Pioneer Blvd.
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
(213) 693-3788
Roster: Renegade
Contact: Louis Anthony (head of A&R)
Style: Commercial rock
Distribution: Indie

BOUVIER RECORDS

Credence Records
2700 W. Burbank Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91505
(818) 843-3614
Roster: Aka, Lejenz, Glorya
Contact: Steve Weber
Style: Blues/R&B pop, commercial pop
Distribution: Indie, CBS International

DAMP SILK

c/o Rock & Roll Headquarters
9265 Dorrington Place
Arleta, CA 91331
(818) 891-1273, (818) 761-0527
Roster: Tebo Hall, Ronnie Lee
Contact: Jonny Sandwich, Dennis Farris
Style: Mainstream American rock & roll
Distribution: Indie

EAGLE RECORDS

P.O. Box 1027
Hermosa Beach, CA 90254
(213) 375-8385, (800) 222-5549
Roster: Josh White, Jr., Livingston Taylor, John Nilsen, Bully Boy, Topel & Ware
Contact: Guthrie Thomas (head of A&R)
Style: Full-service
Distribution: Jem

ENIGMA RECORDS

1750 E. Holly Ave.
El Segundo, CA 90245
(213) 640-6869
Roster: Stryper, Allan Holdsworth, Poison, Smitherens

Contact: Scott Vanderbilt
Style: Full-service
Distribution: Jem/Greenworld locally; Enigma Europe

FUN STUFF

P.O. Box 1814
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
(213) 858-6957
Roster: Rave-Ups, Social Fact
Contact: Chris Bregman
Style: All styles of rock
Distribution: Jem

GREENWORLD RECORDS

20445 Gramercy Place
Torrance, CA 90501
(213) 533-8075
Roster: Odin, Great White, D.I.'s, Hurricane
Contact: Peter Heur, Dean Naleway
Style: Full-service
Distribution: Greenworld & others

HOP SCOTCH RECORDS

150 S. Glenoaks Blvd., Ste. 9221
Burbank, CA 91510
(818) 961-4985
Roster: Hank O & the Boomers, Mondragon
Contact: Eddie J (founder)
Style: "Hop-sound"

INDEPENDENT PROJECT RECORDS

P.O. Box 60357
Los Angeles, CA 90060
Roster: Camper Van Beethoven, Savage Republic, Kommunity FK, Party Boys
Contact: Bruce Licher

LEGEND RECORDS

P.O. Box 1941
Glendale, CA 91209
(213) 660-9061
Roster: Kelle Rhoads, Ozark Mountain Daredevils
Contact: Wayne Knight
Style: Jazz, vintage jazz, country, rock
Distribution: California Records Dist. (CRDT)

LONGHORN RECORDS

P.O. Box 1995
Studio City, CA 91604
(213) 850-0986
Roster: Clyde Brewer's River Road Boys, Bobby Borchers
Contact: Lee Rector, Harvey Appell, Lillian Rodell
Style: Country, all
Distribution: Indie

METAL BLADE RECORDS

22458 Ventura Blvd., Ste. E
Woodland Hills, CA 91364
(818) 344-2437
Roster: Lizzy Borden, Slayer, Omen, Fate's Warning, Attacker
Contact: Judi Frenkel (head of A&R), Joe Kahn (video)
Style: Heavy metal
Distribution: Jem, Greenworld, Important

NEOPHONIC RECORDS

6404 Hollywood Blvd., Ste. 410
Hollywood, CA 90028
(213) 466-8776
Roster: Zamp Nicall, Museum
Contact: Evyen Klean
Style: Pop-rock, new music
Distribution: Indie & Greenworld

ORA INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 3025
La Habra, CA 90632
(714) 548-2864
Roster: Blue Rhythm Band, Pato, Tippa Iric
Contact: Roberto Angotti, Irene Angotti
Style: Reggae
Distribution: Greenworld

PENTHOUSE RECORDS

924 Westwood Blvd., Ste. 1002
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(213) 824-9831
Roster: Threshold
Contact: Toni Biggs
Style: Pop-contempo
Distribution: Indie

SHRAPNEL RECORDS

P.O. Box P
Novato, CA 94948
Roster: Paul Gilbert, Tony Macalpine
Contact: Mike Varney
Style: Progressive heavy metal, anything very musical, guitar-oriented
Distribution: Greenworld, Important, Roadrunner

SLASH RECORDS

7381 Beverly Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90036
(213) 937-4660
Roster: Los Lobos, Blasters, Del Fuegos, Violent Femmes, Bodeanes
Contact: Anna Statman
Style: All forms
Distribution: WEA

SST RECORDS

Box 1
Lawndale, CA 90260
(213) 676-0110
Roster: Black Flag, Meat Puppets, St. Vitus, Angst, Saccharine Trust
Contact: Chuck Dukowski
Style: Non-generic
Distribution: Jem, Greenworld

STATUE RECORDS

11818 Felton Ave.
Hawthorne, CA 90250
(213) 978-8830
Roster: England, Blue Network
Contact: Lincoln Danerst
Style: All forms of rock
Distribution: Statue Dist.

SUITE BEAT

3355 W. El Segundo Blvd.
Hawthorne, CA 90250
(213) 973-8800
Roster: New Marines, Bill Nelson, Savage Republic, Spaghetti Western, Seeing Eye Gods
Contact: Michael Moore (head of A&R)
Style: New music
Distribution: Sounds Good

WHO KNEW RECORDS & TAPES

5911 Fallbrook Ave.
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
Roster: Tower of Power
Contact: Gene Vano
Style: R&B pop
Distribution: Indie

SELECTED INDIE DISTRIBUTORS

ABBEY ROAD

1721 Newport Circle
Santa Ana, CA 92705
(714) 546-7177
Styles: All styles, numerous indies
Specialty: Numerous CDs

GREENWORLD DISTRIBUTORS

20445 Gramercy Pl.
Torrance, CA 90501
(213) 533-8075
Styles: All styles, numerous indies
Specialty: Obscure imports, obscure indies



THE INDEPENDENTS

IMPORTANT RECORDS DISTRIBUTING

14505 Hindry
Lawndale, CA 90260
(213) 643-9783
Styles: All styles, numerous indies
Specialty: Punk, heavy metal, new-age indies

JEM RECORDS WEST INC.

18629 Topham
Reseda, CA 91335
(818) 996-6754
Styles: All styles, numerous indies, new music
Specialty: Full-line including CDs & videos

ROUGH TRADE INC.

326 6th St.
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 621-4307
Styles: New music, no metal
Specialty: All European indies, as well as U.S. indies

SOUNDS GOOD MUSIC CO.

3355 W. El Segundo Blvd.
Hawthorne, CA 90250
(213) 973-8800
Styles: All styles, numerous indies
Specialty: Numerous import indies, largest selection of CDs in U.S., own record label (Suite Beat)

SYSTEMATIC

1331 Folsom St.
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 431-9377
Styles: All styles, numerous indies
Specialty: German & Italian imports, electronic music, experimental music

SELECTED UNDERGROUND COLLEGE RADIO STATIONS

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Formats: Cassettes & vinyl
Contact: Marshall Stax (cassettes); Alisa Schulman (vinyl)
Charts reported to: *CMJ, Gavin, Rockpool, Independent Record Chart*

KCFR 93.5 CAFM

Fullerton College
321 E. Chapman Ave.
Fullerton, CA 92634
(714) 871-2426
Formats: All
Contact: Chuck Ronge
Charts reported to: *CMJ, U.S. Rock*

KCRW 89.9 FM

Santa Monica College
1900 Pico Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90405
(213) 450-5183
Formats: Vinyl only
Charts reported to: None

KCSN 88.5 FM

Cal State Univ./Northridge
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91380
(818) 885-3090
Formats: All
Contact: Todd Sullivan (rock); Diana Blair (country)
Charts reported to: *CMJ*

KDVS 90.3 FM

UC/Davis
14 Lower Freeborn
Davis, CA 95616
(916) 752-4728
Formats: All
Contact: Sean Gillihan
Charts reported to: *CMJ, Gavin, Rockpool, Ward*

KHSU 90.5 FM

Humboldt State Univ.
Arcata, CA 95521
(707) 826-4807
Formats: No cassettes
Contact: Paul Keegan
Charts reported to: *CMJ*

KRCL 101.5 CAFM

Ca. Lutheran College
60 W. Olsen Rd.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
(805) 492-2341
Formats: All
Contact: P.D. (new music, progressive rock)
Charts reported to: None

KSDT 95.7 FM

UC/San Diego, B-015
La Jolla, CA 92093
(619) 452-4225
Formats: Prefer vinyl
Contact: M.D.
Charts reported to: *CMJ, Ward*

KSPC 88.7 FM

Pomona College
Claremont, CA 91711
(714) 621-8157
Formats: All
Contact: M.D.
Charts reported to: *CMJ, Boston Rock*

KUCI 88.9 FM

UC/Irvine
Irvine, CA 91711
(714) 856-6868
Formats: All
Contact: Hilaire Brozio
Charts reported to: *CMJ, Gavin, Rockpool, Ward*

KXLU 88.9 FM

Loyola Marymount Univ.
7101 W. 80th St.
Los Angeles, CA 90045
(213) 642-2866
Formats: Prefer vinyl
Contact: Agent Ava (local bands only)
Charts reported to: *CMJ*

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Specialty: R&B crossover

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Los Angeles, CA 90069
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Specialty: Will help set up distribution; pioneered indie marketing

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(714) 371-4793
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Radio's New Underground Rocks the Campuses

by Katherine Turman

In the late Sixties, a new approach to radio programming took shape. Underground radio, as it was called, ignored the hits in order to play a wide variety of music, reflecting the vitality and eclecticism of the era. The disc jockeys were spontaneous, knowledgeable, and natural, and the term "free-form" was coined. While the Sixties underground stations have deteriorated into today's AOR, a loose network of hip, college-based FM stations has recaptured the maverick energy of radio's original underground.

"If you want to hear what will be the next 'in thing,'" says the Police's Stewart Copeland, "all you have to do is listen to college radio. In fact, it's the only place you can find much of the music that is progressive."

Copeland knows what he's talking about. Though most of the unknown acts played on college stations will remain forever obscure, the Police—and the likes of Duran Duran, Joe Jackson, and Talking Heads—topped college radio's playlists long before they topped the *Billboard* charts.

At most college stations, usually clustered on the far left of the FM dial, the words "alternative" and "progressive" have real validity. College radio, unlike top 40 and other commercial rock and pop stations with "must" songs on their playlists, gives its DJ's nearly unlimited freedom to choose from a diverse list of recordings. And that may mean Run-D.M.C. played back-to-back with the Dead Kennedys.

For instance, the unwritten motto at KXLU (88.9), Loyola Marymount University's student-run station, is "play something so that the listener will never know what is coming up next," General Manager Mark Morris enthuses.

Playing such diverse programming as bilingual Latin jazz/salsa, Chuck Berry, and hardcore punk earned LMU's 3,000-watt station the *College Media Journal's* Best College Radio Station award for 1984. Though the station plays songs such as the Pop-O-Pies' "The Catholics Are Attacking," and the Circle Jerks' "Killing

for Jesus," Morris claims they've had no complaints from the Catholic administration at the University.

College radio isn't just for college kids, however. The people who run commercial stations often turn to college stations seeking indications of coming trends.

"Our music department follows [college station] playlists and finds out their requests, because KIIS likes to stay on top of what music people are enjoying and requesting," boasts Rick Dees, Los Angeles' top-rated morning DJ.

Dees says KIIS and most other commercial stations "don't, except on rare occasions," give bands their first exposure. "That's really not our job. Our job is to play the hot hits, and that's what we do."

KLOS-FM, one of L.A.'s major AOR stations, also keeps an ear on what makes college playlists.

"If college radio has a consensus on committing to a new band, then we don't want to miss them," says Tonmy Hedges, KLOS' former program director. Hedges, 37, got his start at MIT's student station, WMBR, and says college radio offers "the best opportunity to break into the business."

Robert Haber, president of the Long Island firm that publishes *College Media Journal*, believes college radio is attracting more listeners and more attention from commercial stations because "commercial media has tightened up beyond belief. Maybe two or three new bands break over a year—and there is *no other outlet* for tens of thousands of musicians who have nowhere to go to expose their music."

Kim Fowley, purveyor of tastes and trends, feels that "college radio needs to produce an Alan Freed in order for it to be a valid incubator art form," and says he's waiting for "college music television."

Most FM stations run by students offer a predominance of "alternative" rock and no commercials, but the nonprofit stations at some schools, KUSC, for example, are slick operations often affiliated with National Public Radio

(NPR); still others, like USC's KSCR, are broadcast only on-campus.

Other student-run stations that broadcast in the L.A. area and often feature new, untested bands include Claremont College's KSPC (88.7) and UC Irvine's KUCI (88.9). (KUCI and KXLU can share the same FM frequency because their signals only reach ten to 35 miles from their transmitters.) Other college stations, such as Santa Monica College's KCRW or Cal State Northridge's KSCN, are not entirely student-run and are affiliated with NPR, meaning that they are subsidized partly by government grant and partly by fund-raising.

Despite the long hours and dedication put in by the staffs of college stations, most receive no pay. At KSPC, students are allowed 1.3 units of non-academic credit (as you'd receive for a P.E. class) if they write a paper at the end of the quarter about their experience, while at KXLU, the only class credit available is to the student management staff if they participate in a special seminar.

Irvine's KUCI receives 80 percent of its money from student body funds, and raises the other 20 percent itself. Still, it's barely a "maintenance budget," according to General Manager Mike Duffy, 23.

Though LMU gives KXLU the major portion of its funds, the station is still required to raise money to support itself, especially over the summer months. In 1984, though they received \$35,000 in pledges, they were only able to collect from \$24,000 to \$27,000 in actual funds, Morris says.

KSPC, known as "The Space," has a 35-mile transmitting radius, "personable DJ's," no quotas on how often songs on its playlist must be aired, and a "laissez-faire" attitude on the part of KSPC's music director, explains former General Manager Ann Marie Brown, 23.

KUCI has its "own variation of the Top 40," says General Manager Duffy, and it often includes bands like Black Flag and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. "We play everything," he claims. And "everything" includes other shows such

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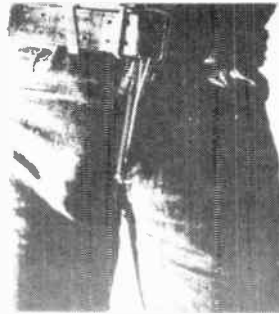
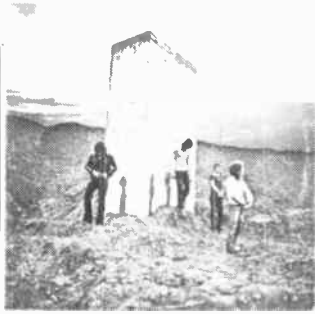
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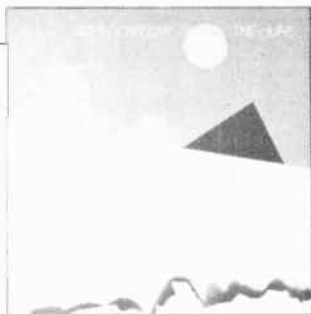
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Underground radio classics, then (at left) and now (at right).



as a Chinese program and a gospel show.

Most student-run stations have programming in blocks, often with rock during the day and specialty blocks ranging from classical to blues to surf music in the evenings and on weekends.

Despite their relative freedom, most stations practice self-censorship in order to keep their FCC license, and, like commercial stations, try not to let obscenities get on the air, though they do slip through.

KSPC is careful to avoid "obscene cuts," which means the program director marks about one out of 15 cuts, "Do Not Play," according to the station's adviser, Julie Frick, director of Claremont College radio.

* * *

College radio is so crucial to building audiences for new bands that one record company caters *primarily* to college stations:

Jay Boberg, 27, president of I.R.S. Records, says the label emphasizes college radio in promoting all 15 of its acts. R.E.M. and the Alarm, two I.R.S. bands, have gone from college radio to commercial and critical success. And for another I.R.S. band, Let's Active, college radio airplay is "just about everything," according to lead singer Mitch Easter.

Boberg describes rock as "music that [college radio] perceives as being good [but] that the majority of the marketplace perceives as being left-of-center—not in the mainstream." While he thinks a lot of I.R.S. acts are seen that way, he adds that "The Alarm and Let's Active are as commercial as can be—it's just that the majority of commercial radio hasn't decided to pay attention to them."

Atlantic Records, a major label that boasts such commercial radio favorites as Foreigner and Ratt, "is actively promoting" its acts from 300-to-350 college stations, claims Judy Libow, vice president of national album promotion. Most of Atlantic's bands are "rock and pop," but Libow feels that although many college stations play alternative music, others are "leaning toward hits."

Scotty Ramond is president of a firm called Taboo Records/Platinum College Promotions (see page 32) that promotes about 40 or 50 bands nationwide to selected college stations. Although he feels a "hot" band on college radio will only sell about 3,000-to-7,000 units, he calls it a "testing ground for what might be a viable product in a commercial market."

Most stations also welcome demo tapes, no

matter what quality. KXLU has a one-hour program called "Demolisten," which airs each Saturday at 6 p.m., and there's even a chance that a demo might break into regular rotation.

College radio does, however, run the risk of becoming a "commercial" alternative medium. That is, alternative stations have obvious favorites, Run-D.M.C. and Bauhaus, for example, who are as *de rigueur* to college radio as Wham! is to MTV, thus giving these stations some not-always-welcome structure and predictability of their own. Then there are the stations that remain too self-indulgent, too alternative, and too trendy to attract a significant audience. Generally, though, college stations are able to achieve a balance.

"What we're looking for is someone with a little originality—somebody doing something a little different," says Russ Iadevaia, 22, ex-KXLU music director, "not something mass-produced like the latest Ford."

To get on the air at KXLU, former Program Director Maryann Earl clarifies, "You need more than a great outfit or cute hair." And college radio may be the only place on which your request for Flesh for Lulu or the Buzzcocks may actually hit the airwaves! ■

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Platinum College Promotions Does Its Homework

by Karen Burch

It's growing—the independent marketplace is getting larger in size and more sophisticated in method. The little labels are growing with their bands, and learning that the best way to get a job done right is to do it themselves.

Taboo Records, currently boasting a roster of eight young bands, is one such indie that took matters into its own hands. Platinum College Promotions was a natural offshoot of Taboo, filling a need that became all-too-apparent during day-to-day operations. Company President Scotty Ramond, 31, elaborates on the emergence of Platinum in 1985. "There was a band called Taboo Zoo—a good band with great tunes—with whom we wanted to become involved. So, in 1983 we said, 'Let's form a record company,' and we decided to name it Taboo Records, since we thought we'd get double the exposure. We recorded a record with Taboo Zoo and put it out on the market. We paid *lots* of money for independent record promotion, advertisement, retail promotion, and everything that entailed."

The results of which, Ramond laments, were not nearly commensurate with the monies being expended. "At that point," the president says, "I thought, 'Well, maybe we can do more of the work ourselves.'" Ramond put that brainstorm on the backburner and continued to attend to the business at hand. A year passed, and after establishing a beginning network of radio stations, press and entertainment contacts, it was time to spread the company's wings a bit. Taboo added a second band to the roster.

"Soon," Ramond continues, "we had four bands. And after about six months of working these four bands, we decided that it took about the same amount of time to get [all four bands] going as it did with one band; we got about equal results for each group. So we said, 'Well, maybe we can take on a little *more* work.'"

Taboo was still paying independent record promoters to work the company's records, relates Ramond, "and it was *extremely* expen-

sive, because we wanted it done *right*. This was anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000 per week—and we usually went for the \$2,000, 'cause we like to go for the best." However, the indie found that although the company was spending \$2,000 per week on an eight-week contract—thus paying big-league figures to ensure competitive promotion—its groups were still receiving airplay on just four-to-ten commercial radio stations. Needless to say, with such limited results, Taboo found it nearly impossible to recover any costs, much less gain significant exposure for the bands.

Ramond soon realized that Taboo was, in essence, running head-on into major label territory. To make some impact, Taboo was going to have to change its game plan, take a different route—the *alternative* route—college radio. All the while, the small label had been tangling horns with commercial radio and aiming its sights at the dreaded AOR stations. "At that time," recalls Ramond, "it was no college whatsoever. We went into business thinking, 'We have a good band and a good song—what more does it take?' We didn't realize that it takes *much more* to make it: years of extensive contacts with the *right* people, enough money to get the *right* kind of advertisement, the *right* people to manage you, playing the *right* shows. We decided, then, to go to the college radio market."

Thus, Platinum College Promotions was begun. Platinum has grown to represent 16 bands, in addition to promoting those artists on the Taboo label. The company soon found the results it was looking for on the college market. "We started dealing with 250 stations nationwide," says Ramond, "and we began to notice that the records were truly accepted; most every record we had on Platinum gained fairly good airplay. The people who made the decisions in the commercial market were quite different from the people who made the decisions in the alternative market. Where in the commercial market they were very interested in money, ratings, and commercial advertisement

dollars, the alternatives were very interested in anything that *couldn't* be played on those commercial stations. And college radio covers such a wide spectrum—folk music, blues, R&B, funk, jazz, pop, etc."

Just how much success can a band that takes the alternative route expect, and how far can these little successes take the band itself? Ramond has definite ideas on the subject: "I can't deny that every musician's dream is to have Capitol Records walk in out of the blue and offer them a million bucks. Everybody's looking for a major deal so they can get their little salary and survive and not have to go to work at Burger King every day. But you have to be real. If you spend \$600 and put out a 45, then say, 'I'm gonna call Platinum and they're gonna make me a star,' that's not very realistic." Ramond pauses, then adds, "It's a building process. Look at Exene, John Doe, the Alvin brothers, the Surf Punks, Motels... are all these people rich? Probably not. X is the perfect example of major label representation—lots of money, lots of records, lots of years behind them. But X is just beginning to break through that barrier in the AOR market."

And what of major labels? Do they heed what's going on in the growing alternative market? "College radio," Ramond asserts, "is very much on the minds of the major labels. In the last few years, because of declining record sales and increased costs all the way around, I think major labels have decided to use this college market in the same way that Platinum does, as a national test market."

Ramond stresses that Platinum's bands are aiming for "a period of prolonged growth. Your first record," he explains, "is very much like handing out your business card. Somebody might read your name and look at your number; they might remember your name and put the card on file and that's about it for the first record. Then, the second record, they say, 'Hmmm, they're back again,' and they take a better look at you. They become curious about your career, thinking that there must be some-



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 Station _____ State _____
 Will you play this record? _____
 Remarks _____

Side A:
 Rhythm of the Nation

Side B:
 Don't Forget

PLATINUM COLLEGE PROMOTIONS



Name _____ State _____
 Station _____ State _____
 Will you play this record? _____
 Remarks _____

Face A:
 Call Me Names
 Two Girls
 Cr. If I Lose

Face B:
 Own The World
 Give Me The Simple Life

thing behind you that makes you a credible person. The first record, you get very limited air-play—30, 40, 50 stations nationwide. Your second record should bring you up to about 75 stations nationwide. By the third, you could be doin' pretty good: You're experienced musically, you've learned from your mistakes, you should possibly have investors, and a better band. You should pretty much know what's goin' on; you might be the biggest draw at the Lingerie, the hottest band in L.A., but haven't entered into

the mega-dollars. Then comes your fourth album, that's what is gonna *make* your band. By now, you should have been introduced to all the people in the United States. Let's face it—the whole goal of any band is to sell records, and before anybody is gonna buy your record, they have to *hear about* you. This is the numbers game. To get into the major ballgame, you have to have been exposed to hundreds of thousands—maybe millions—of people by your fourth record."

As Platinum attempts to gain that exposure, so do the bands the company represents. Regarding his company's philosophy, Ramond explains, "We're a very humanitarian company. You may have a very good product, but you don't know how to market it, and that's where we step in. I really try to care about the groups I work for," he says. "All I want to do is give the bands a start, and see them succeed at any cost." ■

PLATINUM COLLEGE PROMOTIONS



Name _____ State _____
 Station _____ State _____
 Will you play this record? _____
 Remarks _____

Side A:
 Trouble

Side B:
 Old Man's Nightmare

PLATINUM COLLEGE PROMOTIONS



Name _____ State _____
 Station _____ State _____
 Will you play this record? _____
 Remarks _____

Side A:
 Enter Into You

Side B:
 The Testimony

PLATINUM COLLEGE PROMOTIONS



Name _____ State _____
 Station _____ State _____
 Will you play this record? _____
 Remarks _____

Side A:
 South Africa
 No Turning Back

Side B:
 I've Got An Answer

"Your first record," Ramond says, "is very much like handing out your business card." So why not throw in a little questionnaire while you're at it?



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by Billy Cioffi

AUDIO UPDATE

From small things, baby. . . .

Eight-Track Studios

Lucky Dog: Wayne Erwin, the Duke of Demos hisownself, tells us that former Untouchable Josh Harris has been in the Venice studio cutting some new original material. . . . New band the Palendromes are cutting an EP with producers Bobby Wayne and Brother Myles Devereux.

16-Track Studios

Engineer Bill's: Artist Brian Page has been in the room recording his solo album, *Dance*, using session heavyweights David Resnick, Neil Larsen, and Tammi Lynn. Executive producer on the project is attorney Neville Johnson, with Bill Monti engineering. . . . Jacki O and partner Michael O'Brian are in session cutting a self-produced EP for their group, *Digital Dreams*; working title is *Fashion Victim*. Behind the board is Bill Monti.

24-Track & Up

Prime Track: Swift Kick has been working on some demos under the supervision of producer Dennis Moore. Studio owner Danny Tarsha is engineering, with Mark Ludmer assisting. Don Dokken is executive consultant on the project.

Mad Hatter: Producer Denis Degher has completed the new Darius & the Magnets demo tape. One of the songs features a string quartet scored by Carol Shive.

Sound City: Air Supply cutting their newest record for Arista Records with ace producer Bernard Edwards. Engineering the project is Josh Abby, with Bruce (Yogi) Barris assisting. . . . Geffen Records' Lone Justice is working on their second album. Hitmaker Jimmy Iovine is once again producing, while Don Smith and Shelly Yakus

are sharing the faders; Rick Palakow is assisting. . . . Ronnie Dio recently completed mixing the song, "Hide in the Rainbow," for the soundtrack of the current film, *Iron Eagle*. Also working on the Niji Productions project were engineers Angelo Arcuri and Bret Newman. . . . Former MC coverboys the Unforgiven have finally wrapped up their anxiously awaited debut album. Producing the Elektra act was John Boylan (Boston, Charlie Daniels, Quarterflash), with Paul Grupp engineering and Bret Newman assisting.

L.A.W. (Luxury Audio Workshop):

This Las Vegas studio recently played host to B.B. King, who overdubbed horns in studio A for his new album. Engineer on the date was Lee Waters, with assistant Holly Sharpe. . . . Loretta Hollaway, working with Scott Rammer, has completed overdubs utilizing L.A.W.'s brand new Kurzweil 250 system. Waters and Sharpe served as engineer and second, respectively.

Echo Sound: Recently updated to 24 tracks, the Los Feliz room has joined the majors. Dennis St. John has been using the room for all his projects, including Dietrich and Zoom Zoom. St. John, whose credits include CSN, Aerosmith, and George Duke, among many others, has been using staff engineer Al Richardson. . . . Producer Chris Neile cutting a new EP for Neighborhood Threat; Richardson is once again at the console.

Sunset Sound: Warners artist Prince has been working on the soundtrack for his new movie, *Under the Cherry Moon*, with Coke Johnson engineering. . . . Dan Fogelberg is tracking his newest effort for CBS Records, with Niko Bolas behind the board and Stephen Shelton assisting. . . . Sheila E., another Warner artist, has been cutting, with engineer Peggy MacCeary and second Mike Kloster. . . . Guitarist Ry Cooder was in recently producing the soundtrack for the movie *Blue City*, with Mark Ettle on the console and David Glover assisting. . . . Producer Alan Douglas was in the room mixing and editing some live Jimi Hendrix material, with David Glover engineering.

VIDEO UPDATE

by Billy Cioffi

Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers' long-awaited first videocassette, *Pack Up the Plantation—Live*, has just been released by MCA Home Video. Filmed at L.A.'s posh Wiltern Theatre on the final leg of the group's much heralded "Southern Accents" tour, the performance long-form features many Petty standards, plus a gumbo of cover greats never before available. If you have seen T.P.'s flaming version of "So You Want to Be a Rock & Roll Star" on MTV, you know what to expect. Hell, I can't wait to see it, BUT I can't get the VHS copy they sent me into my Beta Hi-Fi. I hope you're reading this, Jane Ayer. General request to publicists everywhere: Please send Beta.

Radio Vision International, the Los Angeles-based agency for home-video-broadcast licensing, is set to represent the first three programs of the new Motown anthology series for home video outside the U.S. and Canada. The series of one-hour programs saluting Motown's top recording acts, past and present, will go into production early this year, with the release of the first three shows set for September. While we're on the subject: How come we don't see the Motown variety show of last summer in the lineup for second-season replacements on network TV? I could do without the inane comedy bits, but Smokey Robinson was a warm and winning host, and three minutes of Smokey is worth 13 episodes of *Hollywood Beat* any day. . . .

Producer Patricia Friedman and Australian director Ian Fletcher have just completed post-production on the first project for their newly formed company, Alchemy Productions. The video clip, "If You Leave," features British popsters Orchestral Manouevres in the Dark and is from the upcoming John Hughes film, *PreTTY in Pink*, directed by Howie Deutch and starring Molly Ringwald. "If You Leave" marks a year of joint efforts for Friedman and Fletcher, with projects including the video clip for another Hughes film, *Weird Science*. *Science*. Friedman's previous credits include "Flesh for Fantasy" for Billy Idol, "Stand Back" for Stevie Nicks, and "Hello" for Lionel Richie.

Lion will be appearing in the soundtrack and accompanying album for *Guide to Getting Girls*, a mini-music-feature film coming from Tri-Star Pictures. Produced by David Reed and directed by Irv Goodnov ("Eat It," *Weird Al*; "Heart of Rock and Roll," Huey Lewis & the News), the soundtrack is scheduled to be released on Ocean Records and distributed by Atlantic.

CCR Video recently completed post-production of the latest music video for Capitol recording artists Queen. The video for "One Vision" features the band performing live in Germany. Queen's performance is intercut with newly cut footage from the just-released Tri-Star feature, *Iron Eagle*, starring Lou Gossett. *Iron Eagle* was directed by Sidney Furie.



Yngwie Intrigue: John B. House of Razor Productions is held captive for the camera by Jim Courtney, stuntman in Universal Tours' "Conan the Barbarian" show. House used the Conan set to direct "I'll See the Light" for Yngwie Malmsteen's *Rising Force* (PolyGram). The clip is currently airing on MTV and other music video outlets.



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The Sound & the Image: Q&A

Lee Ving: Badass Rising

Hollywood is a place that puts fear into the hearts of the bravest souls and corrupts the seemingly incorruptible. Lee Ving already has Fear in his heart, and it makes him strong. The lead singer of the pre-eminent surviving L.A. punk band has found a second career in the corporate Babylon of the film business. In his latest film, *Black Moon Rising*, Ving plays a no-holds-barred bad guy. Whether it's art imitating life or vice versa is anybody's guess. In this interview, our favorite new celluloid villain vents some venom, and there's plenty to go around!



Q: Did you ever give any thought to acting early on?

A: Just when I was making up lies.

Q: You were once the bartender at Donte's in the pre-Fear days; are you a jazz fan?

A: I'm not a jazz fan per se, but I do appreciate the difficulty and the skill involved in playing that particular kind of music. What got me into playing our type of music was the stagnation of the music scene. It was fuckin'-fuckin'-boring-boring! The Doobie Brothers and rehash of old Motown tunes, and everything came out sounding the same. It was music that fit into one or two molds, and if it didn't, nobody would play it and it was tired and hack and I got sick of people singing about their girlfriends and how blue they were, and it was time to break some barriers and start singing about things that were real to the people in the smoggy cities in the Eighties. The common man's survival is a worthy thing for a writer to sing about. You can't be trying to please A&R people forever and ruin whatever time you have in your life to write for them. If you're writing for [A&R people], you're wasting your time. They don't give a fuck—they don't know anything anyway. Their whole job is to keep new artists away from the labels. They don't have the power to sign anyone, but they do have the power to tell you to get fuckin' lost. That's been my experience, which has not been a matter of weeks or days. Oh, they'll buy you lunch and tell you they want to do a big project of some sort. When it finally comes down to it, you hear the same story: They would have loved to do the project, but they don't have the juice or the clout. So why did they waste your time, anyway? I can always use a free lunch, but in general, I'd rather be doing something else.

Q: Has Fear ever come close to a major-label deal?

A: We've spoken to some people, but that's as far as it ever got. We're completely uncompromising. We're doing something that doesn't make us rich, but at least [it's] something that came from us.

Q: How did the acting thing begin? I remember thinking while watching *Decline of Western Civilization*, here's a guy who's hilarious.

He's a lot more thoughtful and a lot more in control than he'd like you to think he is. He's got the podium and he's not telling them anything they really want to hear.

A: We tried never to do that. If there was anything we could play that would piss them off, we would go for that! Wherever we play, we try to get this good hate factor going. I guess whatever this factor is brought about the acting thing. It's not easy, but it's possible for some people to work fairly often [at] being a bad guy. What happened was Alan Arkush came to the Whisky to see Fear play and offered me a part in his film, *Get Crazy*, to do a guy who did pretty much what I was doing in the band. From that, I got an agent and they began to send me out on parts and most of the stuff I would read for would be bad-guy parts. Like this *Black Moon Rising*—it was a job for a real nasty varmint. Somebody that can get in there and do bad things and look like he was having fun doing it. I think I've been able to do that a few times and it's ensured my being able to work from time to time. I think *Black Moon Rising* is the best or most sadistic bad guy I've played to-date. He's also the one I had the most fun doing.

Q: At least in *Streets of Fire*, you got to pick your villain buddy off the ground and take him home after Michael Pare kicked his ass.

A: Drag his sorry ass out of town! I'll tell you, man, in the real world of motorcycle clubs, me being vice president, I'd been looking good to be president after Michael Pare kicked his ass! In fact, they might've made Amy Madigan president! We had a ball doing that film—there were two or three actual motorcycle clubs involved as extras and half of Los Angeles' out-of-work musicians!

Q: What did you think of *Streets of Fire*?

A: I think that was an attempt at being a hit on MTV, even while they were more or less disregarding the movie-going public. I never knew that. We weren't privy to that kind of information at the time. But I think, in retrospect, it's where it had its success. It was certainly not in the theaters; it was on MTV video and cable and on record. The soundtrack must have sold. So I don't think they lost any money on it, although it only lasted a couple of weeks in the theaters.

Q: What about *Black Moon Rising*? It's a part that has no particular musical references or relationships, as in the other films you've done.

A: That's right, and I enjoyed it all the more because of that. I mean, I enjoy acting, I enjoy being an actor, and I'm glad I've had the opportunity to do it. And I really have a good time when I have the chance to act in front of the camera. To do [*Black Moon Rising*], which is not exactly what I do in the band, is more fun. If I'm just doing what I do in the band, I feel like I'm waking up and the camera is on and I'm just brushing my teeth and doing what I do. It's not acting—at least, it's not a stretch. It's not challenging or difficult. That's not to say that *Black Moon Rising* was particularly difficult or challenging, but it was a little different than what I normally get to do. It had a slightly different attitude.

Q: What is it lately about musical personalities and movies being such cozy bedfellows lately?

A: I think whatever tends to increase the possibility of someone spending \$5.50 to go see their movie is what they'll do. They think—and I think correctly—if they bring someone of any notoriety whatsoever into a film, it increases their possibility over an unknown to get box office dollars. That's what it's all about.

Q: So all this came about because of your Fear involvement?

A: Well, that's how it got started. That's what they have to go on. If they need a mean bad guy, a tough guy, to play something, they go to their list of mean tough guys, and I'm on that list.

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Reviews

CONCERTS

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Cray: Stirring modern blues, with fire and intensity.

Robert Cray Band

*Club Lingerie
Hollywood*

It really has been Robert Cray's year—with barnstorming tours of Japan, England, and the U.S., and a hot new album (*False Accusations* on Hightone). In all, some long-overdue recognition for the band the 32-year-old Cray began a dozen years ago. The first of two shows at the Lingerie only beefed up the word-of-mouth rep for one of the most exciting acts out there.

They opened with "Wrapped Up in Love Again," then tore into a speedy instrumental shuffle. Peter Boe's swirling, by-the-Booker organ, Richard Cousins' slap-happy bass, and David Olson's punchy drums demonstrated just how tight these guys are. They slipped into Johnny "Guitar" Watson's "Don't Touch Me," much tougher live than the version on their second LP. Cray's heart-popping vocal and his dazzling guitar chills and thrills turned this into one of the night's highlights. "Change of Heart" recalled the kind of upbeat soul numbers you used to hear from the Foundations or Jay & the Techniques. A spidery Cray intro led into a great blues hybrid of Fenton Robinson's "Tell Me What the Reason" and T-

Bone Walker's "T-Bone Shuffle." Cousins did the stroll, and Boe's tasty organ worked expertly in tandem with the guitar Cray then devastated the house with a piled-on solo fit for a King.

The slow, brooding "Last Time I Get Burned Like This" had a guitar riff that would have been at home on "Rainy Night in Georgia." Cray milked chunky chords from his Strat before tearing into a crisp shuffle called "Move on Back."

The set closed with Cray's already-classic composition, "Phone Booth." He'll be playing this one as long as he's able to climb onto a stage. This number represents what Robert and the Craymen personify: stirring modern blues, with fire and intensity to rival the classic blues of any previous decade. Thanks to this band—and a few others—blues power is again bullying its way into the hearts of new fans everywhere.

—Jim Maloney

Cheap Trick/ John Waite

*The Palladium
Hollywood*

This co-headlining bill featured two rock acts that seem perennially poised on the brink of superstardom. Both appeared to have made it before—Cheap Trick with the *Live at Budokan* album several years

back, and John Waite with "Missing You" recently—but neither has managed to sustain big-time success. This inability to make it last was evidenced by the sobering fact that it took both bands to fill the Hollywood Palladium—barely. Their shows suggested the reasons these acts originally made it big, but it also demonstrated why they're facing leaner times now.

John Waite proved that live, as well as on vinyl, he has one of the best voices in rock—hard-edged, yet always supple and melodic. Unfortunately, his backing band wasn't up to his level, and his songs lacked variety. Aside from "Hiroshima"—which not only was the lone song *not* about love (or rock & roll), but also had the most dynamic arrangement and Waite's best vocals—the set sauntered along to the same midtempo backbeat, with little variation of dynamics. Things didn't cook until Waite ended the set with the Babys' chestnuts, "Head First" and "Midnight Rendezvous," and the Holly Knight-penned "Change." The fact that neither those tunes nor the two encore numbers ("Missing You" and "No Brakes") are from Waite's latest release helps to explain his current state of affairs.

While Waite was content to stroll along, Cheap Trick seemed intent on setting new speed records during their set. Bun E. Carlos is surely one of the most captivating drummers around, but he never stopped bashing away at breakneck speed; consequently, Cheap Trick suffered from the same lack of dynamics that Waite did, only they were stuck on a higher speed. But the band did produce abundant evidence that they deserve a comeback: New songs like "Tonight It's You" were among their best, and the band played an incredibly tight set with some clever live arrangements thrown in to boot. Plus, with the funniest guitarist in rock (Rick Neilson), the most manic drummer (Carlos), and the next Roger Daltrey on vocals (Robin Zander) all sharing the stage, playing classic pop-rockers like "I Want You to Want Me," "If You Want Love You've Got It," and "Surrender," it would be foolish to count Cheap Trick out.

—Stu Simone

Blasters

*The Palace
Hollywood*

Having built a reputation as being one of the toughest, tightest contemporary R&B outfits around, the Blasters had a homecoming party that shook the Palace into a frenzy—it felt as if a locomotive had screeched through the stage. Dave Alvin's guitar charged up his tunes while brother Phil's voice bellowed bigger than a barn as they rode out the storm their collaborative electricity precipitated. Bill Bateman (drums) and John Bazz (bass) assisted in riveting the audience from the start with their raw reflexes. They steamed through the set of

firmly rooted American music, highlighted by a chilling rendition of "Dark Night," and a crack version of "Colored Lights" that left its studio counterpart in the dust. Both of these pieces were taken from their latest gem, *Hardline*, a disc that landed on many critics' lists but (as with its predecessors) not many turntables.

At the Palace, the band performed Dave Alvin's image-laden songs with a genuine spirit that eschewed seriousness in favor of good, hard fun. Adding to the evening's ebullient tone was the tempestuous tenor sax of Lee Allen, who joined the Blasters for some sizzling R&B. Allen is a stage veteran who shined as he spewed some nasty chops and shuffled around the stage. During "One More Dance," he blew out the joint, aiding the band to bring on a fever pitch that I *still* haven't cooled down from.

Sustaining a high level of energy through a set is commonplace for the Blasters; the band's intensity is unmatched by any live act working in rock & roll these days. They are an absolutely must-see act because of the history, punch, and purity they inject into all they do.

—Ronald Coleman

Midge Ure

*The Palace
Hollywood*

Midge Ure, of Ultravox and Band Aid fame, treated Southern California to an impressive show that featured material from his brand-new (and first) solo LP release, *The Gift*. The show opened with a pair of dramatic instrumentals, "Edo" and "Antilles," both packed with emotion and power. Then Ure went on to present the more traditional European pop material from the album, including standouts like "Wastelands," "That Certain Smile," and the international smash, "If I Was." He also threw in a couple of Ultravox numbers and a gloomy, dank cover of Jethro Tull's "Living in the Past," which also appears on *The Gift*.

The bulk of the material catered to the dance-conscious KROQ listener and kept the young crowd moving and grooving throughout. Each song had its own appeal, as well as a lot of class and style. Some were textured, some manic, some haunting, and others could wake the dead. A dramatic lighting scheme reinforced the drama of Ure's music.

Ure is a charismatic and sincere performer with boundless energy and a certain European charm. While his guitar playing is minimalistic, his emotion-filled vocals are full-blooded. His band, which features Danny Mitchell (of the Messengers) on keyboards and Zal Cleminson (formerly of the Sensational Alex Harvey band) on guitar, played with precision and gusto—and the Palace sounded better than I've ever heard it before. A vibrant and highly entertaining show, to say the least.

—N.D. Groov

Reviews

ALBUMS



Bangles *Different Light* Columbia

What's the last band you can remember that features four vocalists—four very good vocalists? This facet is the beauty of the Bangles, and one that shines brightest on *Different Light*.

Granted, longstanding followers who *already* loved 'em back in '82 might be disappointed. After all, they stuck with the band through a name change (from the Bangs), an early personnel shift, and the fey meanderings of the Paisley Underground, of which the former garage girls were an intrinsic part. But the Bangles have discarded that disheveled Sixties look, donning a more sophisticated, even elegant image; in much the same fashion, they've shed that endearing raw, not-quite-developed edge (dating back to the '82 EP) for a new air of musical polish and shine, aided by producer David Kahne. Selling out, you say? Nah, just selling records, I'll bet.

Side One opens up with "Manic Monday," penned by Prince, a bouncy tune sung by Susanna Hoffs. Hoffs puts in such a grand performance here and elsewhere on the LP that she may soon be rightfully acknowledged as one of the best young (female) vocalists to come along in the Eighties. Other standouts on this side are "In a Different Light," led by Vicki Peterson, and Liam Sternberg's "Walk Like an Egyptian," a fanciful foray into "oh-why-oh" that has some good old-fashioned fun with itself.

"If She Knew What She Wants," a pretty Jules Shear tune dressed up by the Bangles, starts off Side Two, the sentimental side. This tender cut flaunts Hoffs' sweet vocal style as well as the quartet's blending of harmony. The last of four superbly chosen covers comes in a spine-tingling rendition of Alex Chilton's "September Gurls," piloted by Michael Steele, with a psychodelia-laden guitar solo performed by guest Rusty Anderson. It took a few plays to find the beauty in Steele's "Following," but I was won over by this chillingly dark tale of wounded psyches.

If *Different Light* isn't everything everyone had hoped for, it's *more*. Harmonized in classic style, the Bangles bring back some memories—and maybe they'll generate some new ones. —Karen Burch



Kommunity FK *Close One Sad Eye* Independent Project Savage Republic *Ceremonial* Independent Project

First off, congratulations (*That's how the Stones spell it, but we're not sure whether Duff knows that.*—Ed) to Independent Project on getting out a dozen-and-a-half releases (these are numbers 17 and 18). Also, as a former letterpressman myself, I salute them for keeping the dying graphic art of letterpress alive! There's really no substitute for that smashed-into-the-cardboard feel.

Now, the music: Often slagged by the local press for reasons I don't understand, Kommunity FK nonetheless turns in a fine, fine LP of gloom, depression, paranoia, drug-addled confusion, and despair. The music invites us to leave our safe little world for another plane filled with heroism, escapism, and various spiritual dangers (okay, so I've been drinking). Whatever a band's message might be, it's always easier to convey when the vocalist is happening, and KFK voxer Patrick Mata has a superb voice, with a warm, full tone and excellent pitch. He emotes in such a way as to sound committed and detached at the same time. The songs are excellent, avoiding gloom-rock clichés by introducing plenty of loud guitar, abbreviated pop-song structures, and thoughtful lyrics. Jules Chaikin's production and Skip Saylor's mix are both excellent as well, making the LP a winner.

Savage Republic's optimistic outlook contrasts KFK's, and their droning music tends to send the listener into a passive state. Side One is predominantly vocal, and while some of the songs are well-written, particularly "A Thousand Days," Robert Loveless' voice is often too far out of tune to pull them off. Side Two is instrumental, and it's interesting at times, but the trance-like mood it provokes tend to send the sounds into the background, and may cause the listener to flick the TV dial around or search for something to react. Still, the

band has its moments, and if you're at all interested in unusual musical arrangements, it's worth checking out. —Screamin' Lord Duff

Chris Hickey *Frames of Mind, Boundaries of Time* CNC

Hickey is a strong, vivid songwriter with a tender voice who works in the long-passe folk-style/singer-songwriter mode. There's a touch of Rick Nelson's warmth crossed with T-Bone Burnett's wit in Hickey's style. "Man of Principle" shoots poisoned arrows of hypocrisy at the situation in Central America; later, the tone sweetens up with a soothing ballad called "There Was a Time." This is the best folk-tinged release since Suzanne Vega's debut a year ago. Don't miss it. (CNC Records, 13535 Ventura Blvd., #201, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423) —Ronald Coleman

The Primitons *The Primitons* Throbbing Lobster

Here's a versatile trio from Bluffpark, Alabama, with fine pop, folk, and rock instincts. A few of the songs suffer from lyrical vagueness, but others—notably "Stars" and "You'll Never Know"—exhibit innovative guitar and percussion capabilities. They sound and feel surprisingly advanced for a young band, which may be attributable to Mitch Easter's production assistance. Easter doesn't get heavy-handed here; he simply allows the band to stretch out and let its character emerge. —Ronald Coleman

The Silos *About Her Steps* Record Collect

If someone described this EP to me, I probably wouldn't take the time to search it out. The Silos sing about commonplace things, and two of the components of their sound are a viola and a pedal steel guitar. These items are not on the list of things I usually look for in great pop music, but on *About Her Steps*, they combine with a rock-solid rhythm section to create an exceptionally good record.

The Silos are led by Walter Salas-Humara, who formed the band after leaving behind the Vulgar Boatmen in central Florida for greener pastures in New York City. Standout tracks on the EP are the R.E.M.-influenced "Shine It Down" and "Susan," a song that answers the musical question, "What would John Mellencamp sound like if he tried to re-do 'Margaritaville'?" The record has an overriding sense of humor that transcends the few production flaws, and I am definitely looking forward to what the band comes up with in the future.

Due to the fact that *About Her Steps* is on a very small label (this is its only release so far), it may prove a bit difficult to find the EP.

Try some of the independent record stores around town, or contact the label directly. It's worth the effort. (Record Collect, Box 20845, Tompkins Square Sta., N.Y., NY 10009) —Dan Fredman

Exploding White Mice *A Nest of Vipers* Bigtime

Australian neo-punk with the ultimate version of "Pipeline." Need I say more? Okay, since you asked. . . . Maybe they don't sing in tune all the time, but there is an abundance of energy coming from this EP. The songs are pretty good, too (especially "Burning Red," which sounds a little like an updated version of something by the Who during *Tommy* or *Sell Out* era), and the overall sound of *A Nest of Vipers* is great, with big drums and exciting, Billy Zoom-like guitar parts. Definitely an album to be played with the stereo cranked up, this is another in a line of great records to be released by local label Bigtime. Keep up the good work. —Dan Fredman



NRBQ & Captain Lou Albano *Lou and the O* Rounder

Even by NRBQ's standards, this new LP is a little off-center. The album is comprised of interviews with Captain Lou (the band's manager/technical advisor), a couple of songs previously released on NRBQ albums, some radio ads done for the band by Captain Lou, and—finally—a whole side recorded live at the Ritz in NYC back in 1981. Following the PMRC's guidelines, the record comes with a warning sticker: "EXPLICIT LANGUAGE/May not be suitable for parents."

I could live without most of the first side. The good stuff has already appeared on other albums, and Albano's version of "La Vie En Rose" doesn't make any artistic breakthroughs as far as pianistic interpretation is concerned. Side Two is another matter. NRBQ is at its best live. Aside from "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," the performances included here have about as much energy to them as any live recording since the Stones did *Get Yer Ya-Yas Out*. The band particularly shines on Terry Adams' "Want You

to Feel Good Too," and the band falls into a great New Orleans/reggae groove on "It Was an Accident."

Lou and the O will appeal to hard-core NRBQ fans and fans of Captain Lou, but it isn't something I'd recommend to anyone unfamiliar with the band. —Dan Fredman

The Stingrays Coast to Coast Stonegarden Records

This album's first cut, "Date With Destiny," should be retitled, "Date With History": From their beach-blanket-bingo replications to their excursions into the mellow-floral mode, the Santa Barbara-based Stingrays replay the Sixties for Eighties turntables. John Ferriter's vocals reminded me of Dylan on helium, especially on "Justice," and the lyrics for this subdued Romantics-sounding song ("I want justice for me & you...") add to that impression. Frankie & Annette could have fruged to "Something Good About a Girl," and while the vocals are strained on the chorus, if you're dancing, you won't notice.

The social-consciousness message hammered out through the LP is downright unavoidable in "Make a Choice." Dig this: "Somewhere deep inside you've got a voice. / It's telling you what you've gotta do / You've gotta make a choice." "Life's Game" goes beyond Donovan to recall Spinal Tap's "Listen to the Flower People." What is refreshing about the Stingrays is that they've carved their own niche in a world of R.E.M. soundalikes.

—Patricia Cook

New Marines Diving for Pearls American

If there is one quality that is necessary for success in the record business, it's tenacity. The New Marines have been playing on the scene for quite some time, gathering little, if any, space in the pop music tabloids around town. *Diving for Pearls* is a solid entry into the L.A. indie scene, the title track being the most cohesive and commercial of the six on the EP. With U2 overtones and lyrics that come from

the romance-as-metaphysics school, the record is competitive, but *in* the pack, not *ahead* of it. Pretensions aside, the New Marines are a pop group. Therefore, to connect with the mainstream, they need that *one* song to get themselves hooked up with a major label. Make no mistake about it—a major label is the place these guys will eventually wind up. Until then, a few good men need to find one great tune; they certainly have the *esprit de corps*.

—Billy Cioffi

GREG GUMBEL



Greg Gumbel California Republic Meticulous

Greg Gumbel's debut album has the atmosphere of a record made in 1967. This isn't a negative component at all; rather, it concerns ideals and artistic aspirations. Gumbel's tunes sound as though they were written on his acoustic guitar, more or less as inner dialogues. Then, just like in the old days, he took them to a few rock players in the Bay Area (CCR's Stu Cook being the most well-known), who worked them up and recorded them. Thus, the musicians *embellish* the songs rather than overwhelming them, as happens on so many of today's commercial recordings. Beneath the hard-folk, Tim Buckley-ish exterior is a solid songwriter whose material could easily be covered in a variety of idioms. "Dragon in the Mountain," for example, could work equally well as a hard-rock/AOR record or a country cruncher for Hank Williams Jr. The mark of a solid craftsman is the capability of his material to take different arrangements. Even when

his pretensions fail, as in the setting to music of John Masfield's hoary poem, "Sea Fever" (didn't we all have to memorize that thing in freshman English class?), the honesty of the effort is evident. Recommended. (Meticulous Records, P.O. Box 40202, Berkeley, CA 94704)

—Billy Cioffi

Mentors You Axed for It Death

This album is definitely not for the weak of heart, and will probably be banned everywhere imaginable. Why, you ask? Take the names of the members—Sickie Wifebeater on guitar, El Duce on drums and vocals, and Dr. Heathen Scum on bass. Feel brave enough to continue? All I can tell you is this has to be the *sickest*, most *vulgar* album I've ever seen; in fact, it's so sick it's *great!*

Musician-wise, this band is not bad, not bad at all. They're clearly a heavy metal band, and you might tend to classify them as thrash, but their songs! "Sandwich of Love" has an almost sing-song melody, like an HM nursery rhyme, the kind you sang in grade school. But lyrics like "Duce proves to be crass / he sticks his dick up her ass" are enough to get you kicked out of the school choir for life. "FFFF Club" is too vulgar to even print here—this is a respectable magazine [*Thanks, Lemmy.—Ed.*]—but it should be noted that the lyric sheet is the best part of the album—if you ever need an insult, you'll find plenty on this baby. Take "Herpes Two"—"She thinks every sex noodle is a handy, the sores are doing a yankee a doodle a dandy." Or "Golden Showers," the closest they come to a thrash song—"bend up and smell my anal vapor, your face is my toilet paper." "Sleep Bandits" is a song about the band drugging some poor girl and raping her while she's passed out. Remind me not to go to their parties!

If you're getting thoroughly disgusted by now, it might console you to know there are things that disgust Mentors, too. On "Judgment Day" they name 'em all—creeps, fags, wimps, new wavers, rich kids,

dykes, and herpes. You have to remember, there's a lot going on in these songs. There are a couple real good compositions—"My Erection Is Over" and "Herpes Two" are real catchy numbers in more ways than one. [*Cute, Lemmy, Now, could we get this over with?—Ed.*] Their music is very ominous-sounding overall, and it tends to be dominated by the bass and drums. There's real good guitar playing throughout the whole thing, although at times you have to strive to hear it over the bass and drums. The production is good, with great effects on El Duce's...er...voice?

I haven't yet decided yet whether these guys just have a strange sense of humor or if they should be classified as "armed and dangerous." I don't think I wanna find out.

—Lemmy Loud

Hirax Raging Violence Metal Blade

The info sticker on the LP cover states that Hirax vocalist Katon W. De Pena can "actually sing," a rarity in the increasingly popular speed-metal genre. A guy who knows De Pena told me that Katon's dad made him listen to Jackie Wilson—the rest is speed-metal history. De Pena *can* sing, and he uses his voice in a standard heavy metal chronic-operatic fashion. He's got good pitch, which tends to put a gloss over the proceedings. Drummer John Tabares comes up with some pretty interesting parts where he could have just double-bassed his way through everything. Look for some clever double-time/half-time changeups in "Bombs of Death," and some unusual 6/8 rhythms in "Suicide." A young band that seems to have introduced some cool musical elements into what can be a pretty one-dimensional style, Hirax might be a good place to start for those interested in taking the speed-metal challenge.

—Screamin' Lord Duff

In our next issue, the Singles, Cassettes, and Ear Wax columns return to their normal positions on these pages.

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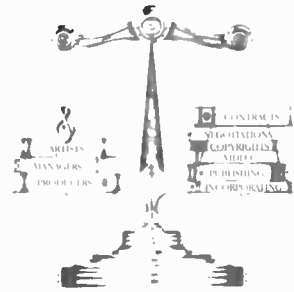
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Sado No Wong's West Santa Monica

□ **The Players:** Tim McGovern, guitar, vocals; Skip Gillette, drums; Rob McCabe, bass.

□ **Material:** Are ya ready for a power trio geared toward the technology-oriented Eighties? It's Sado No, an exciting band that create as much beautiful noise as any I've heard on the scene in months. Influences in musical style are numerous, and very mixed. You'll hear a little post-new wave Brit Progresso (which means the latest version of King Crimson), a little modern funk minus the computers, a little jazz, and a little blues, but mostly, Sado No has updated the standard formula of the Power Trio. To be more specific, the Jimi Hendrix Experience. This is not to say they're back-dated, 'cause even if ya ripped licks straight from Jimi & Co.'s corpse (which they haven't), you'd still be miles ahead of most of what passes for hard rock or heavy metal these days. Instead, Sado No has taken the basic format—rock-steady bass that's very pattern-oriented, solid but busy drums, and a completely freaked-out guitar with vocals almost as an afterthought—and applied it to their own songwriting and/or arrangements. The originals all cooked, and all established an insistent groove within seconds of kicking into gear. The only slightly derivative groove was on the third song, which seemed close in feel to "Gypsy Eyes" by Masta Jimi himself. I didn't catch any of the titles of the originals, but McGovern sang them with a desperate urgency anyway. I did pick up on two covers, a heavy, heavy version of Annette Peacock's "Mama Never Taught Me How to Cook" (not exactly a standard) and a metal-funk version of "Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got That Swing." Lawd!

□ **Musicianship:** It's hard to say how much I enjoy hearing guys who can really play and rock out, too. McGovern is a very inventive player, and very much in control of his constantly changing guitar sound. Ya want trumpets, ya get trumpets;



Photo by Janis Garza

Sado No: Power trio of the Gods.

ya want a herd of stampeding space creatures... you get the idea. Everything from a perfect, clean Strat tone to every imaginative variation on guitar tone madness was seemingly at his fingertips. The next Adrian Belew, or the first Tim McGovern? You decide. Drummer Gillette comes from the old school a bit: large drums, double heads, incredible tone, the ability to actually play a variety of rudiments. His style is sort of a combination of John Bonham and Mitch Mitchell, with Bonham's leden [sic] heaviness and Mitchell's experienced jazziness. He perfectly filled the holes left by McGovern and bassist McCabe, which is exactly what he should do. McCabe is the groove-meister, gluing everything together with fluid (but always exciting) bass playing. Taking cues from Billy Sheehan as much as Noel Redding, McCabe slips in plenty of fancy technique and flash to show ya he just ain't no support player, he's in the front line, a la Jack Bruce.

□ **Performance:** Bear down and go—don't waste time with special effects or fancy outfits. Play your music, pack up yer amp, then get the fuck out! That seems to be the Sado No approach, and again, like their music itself, it's very refreshing.

□ **Summary:** Getting the components of a rock power trio to properly coordinate is an art that isn't easy to master, and for most, it's usually a better idea

to just get a rhythm guitar. Sado No has mastered it. They also have a great grip on progressive song arrangement. About the only thing they need to improve on is making the lyrics more obvious so the theme of the song is easier to absorb and, hence, remember. But, if ya just wanna groove and rock out, and hear some great sounds and playing, Sado No is right there, right now.

—Screamin' Lord Duff

Vinny Golia Big Band

The L.A. Theatre Center
 Los Angeles

□ **The Players:** Vinny Golia, Steve Fowler, Mike Acosta, Wynell Montgomery, David Ocker, various woodwinds; John Fumo, Ralf Rickert, Sal Cracchiolo, trumpets, flugelhorns; John Rapson, Mike Vlatkovich, Doug Wintz, trombones; Eric Messerschmidt, tuba; David Johnson, vibes, marimbas; Wayne Peet, piano, conductor; Ken Filiano, Robert Miranda, basses; Billy Mintz, drums; Alex Cline, percussion.

□ **Material:** Golia's inventive arrangements of his nine originals kept the music from every becoming predictable. Writing with the individual musicians in mind rather than for each grouping of instruments, Vinny created dense structures that combined jazz improvisation with many elements taken from modern classical music, specif-

ically purposely pompous rhythms and a sense of drama. Among the highlights were the haunting themes of "Ted Williams," the Mingus-like freebop melody of "Views," a peaceful yet complex feature for Ocker's clarinet ("Serene"), the fiery Latin rhythms of "The Original Mexican Bob," and a tribute to a sea monster ("The Kreikan"), which eventually segued into a hot blues vamp. Far from a conventional big band session.

□ **Musicianship:** Golia featured some of the top young L.A.-based jazz musicians around. Most impressive was the double rhythm section. The two bassists were a constant joy, alternating between bowing and plucking, while adding fire to the proceedings. The two percussionists were colorful, and vibist Dave Johnson was an important part of the group's sound. Most of the players received solo space, notably trombonist Vlatkovich, Ockers (so good to hear the clarinet in a modern setting), altoist Fowler (bringing to mind Eric Dolphy), and the chords of trombonist John Rapsen. Golia, who soloed on several instruments including tenor, bass sax, Jap-

anese flute, and a type of wind-pipes, did not feature himself enough.

□ **Performance:** The stage, which utilized four levels, was perfect for this unit. While the piano and reeds were at ground level and the percussionists were slightly above that, the bassists and tuba were a flight up, and the brass towered over the audience. Golia was a bit shy in talking to the audience, but obviously felt quite proud of his musicians' performances. The players, especially the bassists, really seemed to enjoy themselves.

□ **Summary:** A very interesting night of music that would be most highly recommended to those with open ears. Judging from the audience (which ranged from hip teenagers to elderly women), people are more open-minded than one would think. True, there were moments when the musicians meandered a bit, seemingly waiting for inspiration to strike, but overall, the music, which fused together a wide variety of disparate elements, succeeded on its own terms.

—Scott Yanow



Vinny Golia: Composing for individual musicians rather than instrument groupings.

El Grupo Sexo

Safari Sam's
Huntington Beach

□ **The Players:** Jason Mann, guitar, vocals; Vince Meghrouni, tenor sax; Don Carroll, guitar, accordion; Miles Gillette, drums; Tony Atherton, alto sax; Dave Otto, trumpet; John Karasawa, bass.

□ **Material:** One wants it to be furious for some nit-wit reason, at least / did. Power chords are chased by quick locomotive percussion and drums as the band opens with their apparent theme song, "Squirrel Boy!" It is hard to reckon whether Foghat or Gilligan's Island reruns is the dominant influence. If you're still trying to figure the band out by the time they play Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love," you've missed the point. Robert Plant is brought up onstage, via a turntable scratching his vocals underneath a mess of horns. The humor is that the Sexo make you almost believe their silly passion. Trustworthy? No. If you aren't watching Jason Mann grunt, sweat, and smoke, or bassist John Karasawa play the role of a Spinal Tap warrior, you might take the band and its diverse melting pot of influences (Tower of Power, Zep, Zappa) seriously. Other stylings include the power funkadelic R&B of "Slirp" and "Sexoholic." As Mann inches his way to the mike and sings, "Next time you hear the phone ring, pick it up, baby, 'cause it might be me," snide snickering characteristic of crowds at any Chili's or Fishbone show is mandatory.

□ **Musicianship:** Tight-fitting and tailored for humor and gags, the Grupo plays with cool confidence and collected competence. Mann's guitar is brightly modest, making smart moves and displaying a clever ability without being redundant or overbearing. The horn section, bunched in a corner, along with Karasawa's rough-edged bass lines, add color cosmetics to the set and summon drunks to their feet. It's not the competence that's effective or even relevant in this case, but the collaboration of all the essentials, packaged and processed lightheartedly, that make this soul/punk/funk/metal outfit genuine contenders in So Cal's alternative picture.

□ **Performance:** The band lines up onstage like goons at a singles bar. It's a mess, a bonafide collection of cartoon-

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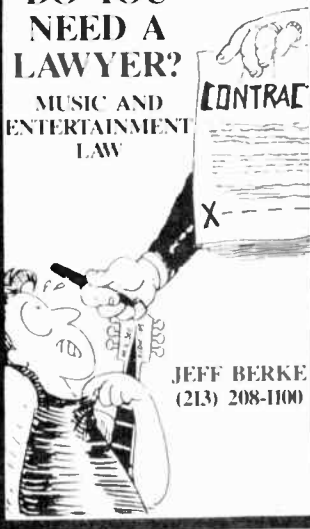
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ish convulsions. Jason Mann moves like a budding aerobics instructor or Dan Rather auditioning for Iron Maiden. "Just kidding," he says, taking a cigarette from the neck of his guitar, smiling and inhaling, trying to figure out what Zep song he is going to butcher. The guy is a ham. The horn section could be confused with the Lame Flames or the Beastie Boys on mood elevators—out of step, out of boredom, out of beer. One can almost be moved to sympathy until one of the jokesters croons "Like a Virgin," and all is put into place. It's effective and passionate and stupid and ridiculous and dead cool.

□ **Summary:** The band has undergone a few changes, taken a few breaks in the past few years, and up until now have been modestly recognized in clubs around town. Expanding on a once ska-flavored sound, the band has easily moved into a diverse musical blend. Although "Slirp" indicates a George Clinton contingency, the Sexo provide interesting ideas, if not just tight power rhythms and silly antics. One night with the Sexo changes lives, I have heard—it changed mine, and I'm cool enough as it is.

—Josh Kramer

Andrew Gordon Band

*Hop Singh's
Marina del Rey*

□ **The Players:** Andrew Gordon, keyboards, sequencers, drum machines; Frank Unzueta, guitar; D. Boale, electronic drums, drum machines; Frank Villafranca, saxophones, flute.

□ **Material:** Gordon writes comprehensive pieces that are of the modern techno-funk fusion genre. He creates moods and textures, drawing form influences as diverse as Jeff Lorber, Jan Hammer, Mike Oldfield, and Andreas Vollenwieder. As is the nature of fusion, some of the numbers get a bit long and lack variance. A majority of the songs were cheery and light with a funky groove. By far his strongest piece is "Walking the Lonely Street," an Oldfieldian composition full of eerie nuances and

haunting melodies. "Rattle Snake Shake" (the third, yet most unique song with that same title) was another stand-out; based on a seemingly traditional African rhythm, it drifts from the graceful to the frightening and back again. "Turnaround" is a more typical Gordon concoction with fresh and uplifting lines over a techno groove featuring sax and/or synthesizer leads.

□ **Musicianship:** Gordon has a fine collection of players. Each is very capable, aware, and talented. The unit works well together, although they could be tighter and display more interaction. Gordon is an inventive keyboardist with a firm grip on tasteful and unobtrusive uses of modern keyboard technology. He is a dynamic player and makes wise use of available sounds without letting his instruments do all the work. Boale's rhythm programs and live electronic fills add a real funk to the music, making it very appropriate for dance. Unzueta plays a well-placed and accomplished style of guitar, blending traditional funk and fusion styles into stimulating and progressive subtleties. The other Frank (Villafranca) is a quality saxophonist/flutist with a refined and educated approach to fusion. The quartet as a unit needs to make a conscious use of dynamics and work on more variance in their writing and arrangements. Overall, they are fine players with good ideas which they are capable of executing with precision and style.

□ **Performance:** These hip cats have a riot making music; this is obvious through their sincere and enthusiastic presentation. They are very involved in and exciting about sharing their material, yet unpretentious in their presence. Gordon's traditional fusion set featured each member as a soloist *without* the all-too-popular "rock & roll solo hype." Each member held his own musically and restrained from excessive flash while maintaining appropriate energy



Andrew Gordon

and the attention to detail that's so important in modern jazz.

□ **Summary:** The Andrew Gordon Band is a fine unit of competent and interesting fusion players, full of obvious talent and competitive ideas. They play well as a unit and as featured soloists. Their compositions are refreshing and light as a rule, the exception to this being their strongest material. Each song is danceable and jazzy-yet-funky. The band seems to do the best with their less mainstream compositions, leaning more toward esoteric melodies and slower grooves. With more time together, their presentation and dynamics should fall into place. Gordon needs to go out on a limb more in his writings, avoiding the conventional fusion approach. His unusual material seems to work better and stay interesting longer.

—N.D. Groov

Dino's Revenge Wong's West Santa Monica

□ **The Players:** Steve Ameche, keyboards, vocals; Hollywood Fats, lead guitar; Kevan Hill, bass, vocals; Butch Azevedo, drums, vocals.

□ **Material:** Dino's Revenge blends hot, upbeat, hard-driving rhythms with cool melodic lines. The band has compiled some clever original tunes with an underlying garage sound. They came up with unique arrangements of "Paint It, Black" and Harry Belafonte's "Day-O," both being delivered with the



Dino's Revenge on the lovely downstairs stage at Wong's.

Photo by Linda Fitzpatrick



People in Motion: Men with a mission.

continuity of their original material. At first, the songs seemed somewhat threatening. However, after a closer listen to the lyrics, there appeared to be a double (less intimidating) message. In "Angel," Ameche seems to take a direct shot at the Guardian Angels. Again, the lyrics seemed to mix both positive and negative views. "My Dad," while being a witty and catchy number for the most part, seemed to be just a slight bit trendy and somewhat out-of-place with the rest of the set.

□ **Musicianship:** Hollywood Fats (with John Lee Hooker, Jimmy Witherspoon, Muddy Waters, William Clark, Lightning Hopkins gigs to his credit), falls second to no one when nesting in his own habitat, the blues. It's a truly courageous step in his career to diversify, and he pulls it off. Ameche, whose keyboard technique seemed to go untested, demonstrated a unique songwriting ability coupled with a well-developed vocal style. Azevedo, formally with Tina Turner, showed the drummer novice how to "over-fill" and get away with it while looking cool.

□ **Performance:** The band laid out an energetic performance which at times seemed to reach velocities of near one-hundred mph. The four seasoned veterans put on an abrasive show, which appeared to take a Wong's Saturday night audience by surprise. At first glance, one's attention is immediately drawn to the fascinating and charismatic Hollywood Fats on lead guitar. His huge, driving power chords and ripping leads seemed to force the band into an aggressive and non-ceasing state of frenzy. The Hill/Azevedo team punched out a continuous driving rhythm matched by few around the current club scene. Frontman Ameche was obscured by a wall of keyboards.

He became much more effective when he would emerge from the dark to centerstage and take control. Ameche's versatile voice worked well on material demanding a serious approach and also carried the post-punk material, which required a great deal more conviction. At points during the show, Ameche scrambled into the audience hysterically, seeking to intimidate anyone who dared establish eye contact with him. The band carried a "who cares" attitude, but demonstrated an acute sense of camaraderie.

□ **Summary:** Dino's Revenge, struggling with a recent personnel change after losing guitarist Marshall Ronner to the Cruzados, performed this show with confidence. These four men take an unusual approach to a style of music not often taken very seriously. Ameche, Hill, and Azevedo seemed to have come a long way since their days in the Twisters. It almost seems as if their long search for a new direction may have finally been resolved.

—Louise Rogers

People in Motion Music Machine West Los Angeles

□ **The Players:** Pat Allen, drums; Dominic Bakewell, bass, vocals; Dale Nickey, guitar, vocals; Rick Vartian, keyboards, vocals.

□ **Material:** In this decade, pop and rock musicians have all but abandoned socio-political concerns. People in Motion sing out for social awareness, cloaking the lyrics in a neo-progressive yet extremely up-to-date musical style. This is heavy music dealing with heavy themes including the Salvadoran issue and the potential for world Armageddon. This would be very preachy and overbear-

ing if not for PIM's unrelenting dance beat. Cross-cultural rhythms keep the masses moving, and well-written commentaries keep audiences thinking long after the music is over.

□ **Musicianship:** People in Motion turn out some remarkable playing. This is one of the tightest units in recent memory, which is astounding considering the intricacies of progressive music. Vocals are shared by Nickey and Bakewell. Both have fine voices, though Bakewell seems most secure as a vocalist. All musicianship is ace. A special nod to drummer Allen, who recalls Phil Collins in his conservative use of cymbals, and to keyboardist Vartian, who is never overbearing even though the sound mix pushes his instrument to the foreground.

□ **Performance:** Sound problems kept the band in a fairly low-energy mode for the first part of the set. When these troubles cleared up (mostly) mid-set, all members showed themselves to be natural, but not showy, performers. Audience contact was good; however, the band could benefit from some subtle choreography to lighten up the seriousness of their themes. True, the emphasis here is on message and music, but a bit of showmanship could help People in Motion widen their prospective audience base.

□ **Summary:** These involved and involving musicians deserve to be heard. Not content to be merely a good commercial dance band, they are men with a mission. Whether or not one concurs with their politics, People in Motion must be congratulated for having a point-of-view in the first place, and for presenting it in a manner that is both entertaining and challenging.

—Tom Kidd

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Club Data

by S. L. Duff



Catch the Johnny Otis show at Wong's, Feb. 15th.

As you have probably heard by now, the **Golden Bear** in Huntington Beach is closed, and may be completely bulldozed away. The story is complex, but **Club Data** was fortunate enough to have MC staffer **Tammy Lynn** on the scene, diggin' up info. Apparently, Bear runners **Richard** and **Charles Babiracky** have hit head-on into two separate problems, either of which could permanently shut down the club. First, the Babiracky brothers, who have run the club continuously since 1974, recently declared bankruptcy. **Richard Schwartz** actually owns the property, and leases it to the brothers. The bankruptcy case caused the brothers to lose tenancy, but they are trying to regain it legally, claiming there were some misrepresentations in their case which they are currently appealing. Says Richard Babiracky, "If we had had 30 more days, we could have paid off our creditors 100 percent with the benefit concerns the various artists had indicated they would perform had they known the Golden Bear was closing."

Meanwhile, the Bear's building isn't up to earthquake safety codes, and a prominent local property developer, **Huntington Pacifica Development**, wants to level the property and, allegedly, put up a proposed mega-hotel across from the pier. Apparently, there are a total of fifty-some buildings in the downtown Huntington Beach area that await a similar fate, including the city's original jail and City Hall. One group that's none too happy about this is the **Huntington Beach Historical Heritage Society**, who are trying to prove to the **H.B. City Council** that these buildings are of historical significance and should not be destroyed. The City Council met on the issue on February 3rd, and MC's Ms. Lynn spoke on behalf of the Bear. She pointed out that one concerned citizen had brought into the meeting a petition to save the Bear with the signatures of 420 H.B. residents. Also, luckily for the club, Mayor pro-tem **Ruth Finley** seems to be one of the club's supporters. "The question of destroying the Bear is much too delicate to be made quickly and unilateral-

ly by the developer. The building has too much history and sentiment," said Finley.

Lynn herself spoke on behalf of the Bear, but noted that neither of the Babiracky brothers were present at the meeting. Now, here's the most interesting part. **Richard Schwartz**, who owns the land the Golden Bear stands on, also is the president of Huntington Pacifica Development. What that would seem to mean is, the man who really owns the club stands to gain the most by it being leveled.

The end result of the Council meeting as we go to deadline was this: Any developer desiring to bulldoze a building must apply to the city and wait ten days for approval. Within the ten days, the contractor must prove the specific building has no historical significance and/or it can't be fixed up to comply with earthquake safety standards.

About the decision, Lynn muses, "My opinion is that the City Council will decide to tear down three walls, keep the front wall as a facade representing the Spanish architecture, and move it [the remaining wall] elsewhere!"

Richard Babiracky said, "Basically, we got shafted. I'm not done fighting for this place, but I guarantee whatever happens, the Golden Bear will be back at another location soon!"

The preceding quotes from Babiracky and Finley were from a recent edition of the *L.A. Times*. Now, if you'd like to help stop the bulldozers, write to: Huntington Beach City Council, 2000 Main, Huntington Beach, CA 92648, or call the City Clerk at (714) 536-5226.

On a related note, concert promoter and manager **Steve Little** is bringing in talent and putting on shows at **Louie Louie's** in the city of Orange. "In O.C. right now, there's a big need for original clubs," said Little. "Now, with the Golden Bear gone, and Rick Babiracky was indeed a fighter, but with that [void] Louie Louie's could really take off!" The club is looking to increase the amount of entertainment it features, and Little notes that the club is clean and features great sound and lights, and that it would make a

great showcase venue. If you are interested in booking a local or national act into the club, which is located at 777 South Main in Orange, call Little at (714) 547-7020 or (714) 525-0285.

Wes Hupp from **Angel of the Odd** clued us in on **Ronnie's**, a new club in Monrovia that we were unfamiliar with. A 200- to 300-capacity venue located at 121 East Huntington, the club was opened by **Ron Yates**, a theatrical agent. Yates had bought the property the club stands on, but had to acquire the business on the lot—which at the time was the **Hustler Pool Hall**—to close escrow. Having bought the pool hall, a band called **Helmut** asked Yates if they could play there, and the rest, as they say, is history. Since then Yates has put in a lighting and sound system. The club serves beer and wine and welcomes all kinds of original rock music, and even has **Punk Night** on Tuesdays. Interested? Call Yates at All Talent Agency, (818) 797-2422.

Congratulations to **Beachy** at the **Music Machine**, as his wife gave birth to a healthy baby girl on January 26th, **Superbowl Sunday**. **Morgan Ashley** is the little crumb-snatcher's name, and the whole affair seems to have put Beachy into a charitable mood. Move over, **Geldof**, for Beachy and the **Music Machine** will present **Lodge Aid** to benefit the **Loyal Order of the Water Buffalo**. Starting at 8:00 p.m. on February 13th, the show will feature, says Beachy, "a host of celebrities and a ton of bands," including **Fishbone, Tex, Little Kings, L.A. Guns**, and as many as 15 other musical acts. All groups, a la Live Aid, will play short, four or five song sets, and all the groups will share equipment to lessen time between sets.

Shows you should go to: The **Johnny Otis Show**, **Madame Wong's West**, Feb. 15th; **Perri LP** party, **At My Place**, Feb. 18th; **Vixen, Troub**, Feb. 21st; **Legal Weapon, Fright Wig, Raszebrae** at the **Music Machine**, Feb. 21st, and have a very romantic Valentine's Day with the **Mentors** at **Club Lingerie**.

LiveAction Chart

The **Live Action Chart** reports on the three top-drawing acts at various Los Angeles Area clubs. The clubs range from small 100-150 seaters to 1,000 seaters. We rotate the selected clubs each issue in order to give the widest possible range of information. Each club's top three is reported to us by the individual responsible for the bookings.

Reporting Dates January 21-February 3

Wong's West Santa Monica

1. 5 Cool What
2. Flip City
3. Trash

Music Machine West Los Angeles

1. Meat Puppets/Blood on the Saddle
2. Danny & Dusty
3. Joneses/L.A. Guns

AntiClub Hollywood

1. Party Boys
2. Leaving Trains
3. Rotundi

FM Station North Hollywood

1. Great White
2. Sandy West & Cherie Currie
3. Habit

Club Lingerie Hollywood

1. Roy Buchanan
2. Robert Cray Band
3. NRBQ

Troubadour West Hollywood

1. Abbatior
2. Castle
3. Mary Poppinz

Central Hollywood

1. Nelsons
2. Chuck E. Weiss
3. Billy & the Beaters

Crazy Horse Santa Ana

1. Helen Reddy
2. American Made
3. Sawyer Brown

At My Place Santa Monica

1. Taj Mahal
2. Linda Tillery
3. Big Daddy

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Moist & Meaty—Are you ready for prop rock? This band has the most bizarre and humorous array of props and costumes—ya gotta see it to believe it. The songs are funny, too, and go hand-in-hand with the theatrical trappings. Listen for "Rock 'n' Roll Diary" and "Pucker Up and Pop Me a Wet One" as winners. Interesting sidelight: two drummers in this band, and they play in perfect sync with each other, too.

Showcase

by Tom Kidd



Skid with Ojay Valley washboard & Mojo with Guild guitar.

Mojo Nixon & Skid Roper

I like Mojo Nixon. He sings the way Hunter Thompson writes—as close to the bone as possible and to hell with the consequences. I like his partner Skid Roper, too, though he is much quieter than Mojo. As Skid says, “I mean every word I don’t say.”

I like Mojo Nixon because I have always loved roots music and the blues. Mojo and Skid play as if they just discovered a bunch of old records in somebody’s attic and feel compelled to play them simultaneously. This is crazy stuff; it’s also definitive of whatever art form they happen to be borrowing from at the time. Mojo preaches, growls, and shouts his way through a set, not unlike Jerry Lee Lewis. The duo also sounds a bit like the Violent Femmes, and sometimes Mojo sounds quite a bit like George Thorogood, albeit a Thorogood on some very heavy and dangerous drugs.

Mojo might have some qualms about that last comparison. “I’m kind of self-conscious about this George Thorogood thing,” he admits. “I sing like him naturally. I don’t even *try* to sound like him. And I kind of look like him.” (“Poor guy,” interjects Skid.) “I feel we do something pretty different from George Thorogood,” Mojo continues. “It’s the same mode, but he’s much more of an instrumentalist while I’m much more of a humorist.”

When Mojo’s working, he is pretty funny to watch, and even funnier to listen to. A typical set consists of, in his own words, “speaking in tongues, touching ourselves, body gyrations, and that kind of thing.” Through it all, Skid Roper keeps a straight face and a strong rhythm on the washboard and stick drum. I wish I had his self-control.

Lots of other people like Mojo Nixon and Skid Roper. San Diego’s Beat Farmers like them too, so much that they took the dynamic duo on tour with them at the end of 1985. Los Angeles’ Long

Ryders like them so much, they had them open on a weekend at the trendy Lingerie. This was on the same night, recently, when fire marshalls closed down the show due to overcrowding. Athen’s own R.E.M. asked these two to play a private party at the Lhasa in L.A., where Mojo and Skid were joined onstage by R.E.M.’s Peter Buck and the Dream Syndicate’s Steve Wynn.

College radio stations like Mojo and Skid as well. According to Mojo, cuts from their self-titled RBI/Enigma debut LP are “somewhere between eleventh and thirtieth on any number of college stations’ playlists nationwide.” The album hit Number One at Pomona College’s KSPC in Claremont, CA. For those not in college, Mojo is also heard on 91X in San Diego where, according to *Music Connection’s* Radio Report, the LP is in regular rotation. KXLU in Los Angeles and various late night specialty shows have also been known to play cuts, yet mainstream radio has been a little slow to pick up on the phenomenon. When asked what he intends to do to widen his listener base, Mojo replies, “Play more.”

Playing any more frequently may be a hard thing to do, considering the duo has averaged three shows per week since its inception two-and-a-half years ago. They will, however, take their music to more people by traveling to the East Coast at the end of the Beat Farmers tour. Whistle stops in Europe are being planned over at Enigma as well. For those with radios and televisions in the San Diego area, Mojo may be heard as a spokesman for *Spin* magazine and seen in advertisements for the Guitar Trader store. These ads are a *blast*. A recent commercial featured Mojo in a dress, beating his chest with two loaves of French bread. “They [Guitar Trader] like it ‘cause I just go in there and make ‘em up. They say, ‘You gotta say this, you gotta say that,’ and I just key in on something and just rant and rave. I don’t have to write down no script. I like making it up as I go along,” says Mojo.

Making things up as you go along is something very few people do well. Credit Mojo with

an intense and intelligent energy level that keeps him bopping around the stages of various Southern California night spots. He has more stamina than many people half his age (which he does not reveal—and neither will I since we were born in the same year.) Mojo claims his endurance is due to “boredom” and “pent-up frustration.” Skid says it comes from “Mountain Dew. He drinks it by the case.”

What I like best about Mojo Nixon and Skid Roper is that every time I take friends to see them, they thank me profusely and beg me to let them know the next time the duo plays. “We are a very live-oriented, performance-oriented group,” Mojo asserts. “A lot of the stuff we do is based on audience response.”

The audience response will sometimes lead to a whole different kind of performance; a spontaneous combustion of ideas in Mojo’s mind that leads the duo to write songs on the spot. “Many times we’ll play a song I’d never heard before that night,” says Skid. Mojo answers, “If it’s kind of like a small show, or if I’m in the mood, or I read something in the paper that day, I’ll just kind of wing it.” In the context of the band’s performance and style, it seems almost obscene to think one might be seeing the soul of the artist revealed. Strangely enough, that is *exactly* what happens. “The words are not meant to be taken literally,” says Mojo. “It’s not like I’m saying A-B-C-D, I’m saying A-R-L-C-F. It’s an impressionistic thing. It’s supposed to trigger your mind.”

Mojo and Skid have triggered enough minds that the mouths attached to them have started to spread the word. As their audience, reputations, and odometer readings all grow at the same rate, one could almost see these two as the long-awaited Next Big Thing. Already a coalition of New Blues bands has been appearing regularly at various locales in the City of the Angles, drawing crowds that many self-consciously “commercial” bands wish were theirs.

Sideman in the Sidebar: Skid Roper Speaks

No one sets out in music to be a sideman. It’s a hard life, and the rewards are few. In the case of Skid Roper, Mojo Nixon’s erstwhile percussionist/arranger, the rewards are sometimes fewer. Though Skid’s name appears on the album (he designed the art work), he doesn’t even receive billing on Los Angeles club marquees. He does speak, though, and certainly has his own ideas. I asked him for a history lesson.

“I first met Mojo when he was playing in a band called the Majestics down in San Diego. I was playing in a band called the Evasions. Then he went out on his own to conquer the world and asked me to play snare drum. I just couldn’t find a snare, but I had this washboard on a stick that started out as a bass drum, like a washtub bass.

“I used to play mandolin (with Country Dick & the Snuggle Bunnies). When I wasn’t playing mandolin, I used to bang on a washboard as sort of a joke. After a couple years playing with Mojo, I’d gotten kind of good at it. It’s not really normal. It’s the exact opposite of drums.”

Skid, the unsung hero of Mojo Nixon’s unmitigated glory, is a very important part of the act. After all, what would Mojo have without Skid to serve as Greek chorus? Skid waxes philosophical and answers, “A bad George Thorogood impression.”

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•Prod/arranger/key/bd/sk male vocalist for demo work on spec. Jeffrey Osborne/James Ingram-style, poss record deal. Aaron 213-465-1684

•Male vocalist needed for estab'd rock band. Keith after 3pm 818-363-3778

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•Female singer w/rd for 24-trk recording. Harmonies only, no pay, great songs David 218-896-0458

•Punk singer w/rd for recording 213-543-1791

•Lead vocalist needed for recording proj. Poland 714-841-9662

•Drummer skng casuals Grt plyr/reader, very exp'd, dependable & pro, xlt equip & trans. Pro sits only Michael 213-479-0563

•Versatile tasteful drummer, 32, sks T40 band. Exp'd musicians only. So Bay area Marly 213-326-4906

•Drummer, 32, sks casual band. Roger 818-352-9326

•Drummer w/lead vox, 18 yrs exp, simple, steady, xlt equip, latest Simmons, all styles, reads, sks w/king band or casuals Kevin 818-846-7585

•Pro drummer lking for w/king band or T40 gig. Album credits Ron Roman 818-981-8403

•Pro drummer avail, hi-energy, hd-hitting, melodic, xlt timing, showmanship & image, eclectic in styles. Herbert Freed 213-876-7311

•Lead drummer sks estab'd band w/gcol for success. Hv credits, equip, image, abil Infl Missing Persons, Prince, Icon (Tommy Lee meets Bozoo) Matt Montgomery 818-363-6631

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•Rhythm section, bassist & drummer, most powerful! Our playing does the talking Infl UFO, Montrose, Michael Upton/Laurent Rebboah 818-997-7716

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•Backbeat drummer, all pro, sks comm HR band w/mgmt Michael 213-479-0563

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•Hot drummer w/rd, infl Neil Peart of Rush, dbl-bass plyr helpful, pros only, for trio 213-734-3028

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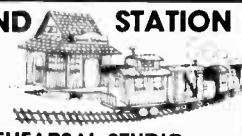
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