

# MUSICIAN

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# MUSICIAN

**The Ramones** have refused to allow the hard lessons of nine years of thrash 'n' brimstone to impair their punk propensities and continue to inhabit the edges of the known universe. Charles M. Young talks with the unregenerate Ramones and bids farewell to their patron saint, critic/musician Lester Bangs. Page 42

**Bob Marley**, reggae's once and future sovereign, left a musical legacy of prophecy and struggle. In an exclusive, extraordinary excerpt from his biography of Marley, *Catch a Fire*, Timothy White explores the birth of Marley's beliefs, the legends and magic of his childhood and the final revelation that myths must change to survive in the modern world. Page 50

**Don Henley & Danny Kortchmar**, as essential members of the Eagles and James Taylor's band respectively, were two of the prime architects of 70s mellow. Now, they tell Mitchell Glazer, they are tired of being laid-back and are busy stirring up as much musical trouble as they can. A unique inside glimpse into the Eagles and JT. Page 66



STEVEN NEEDHAM

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# WHEN STEVE SMITH RIDES HIS ZILDJANS, YOU'RE IN FOR AN EXCITING JOURNEY.

Steve grew up just around the corner from The Zildjian factory. Of course, for the past few years he hasn't been around all that much, what with his touring with Jean Luc Ponty, Ronnie Montrose and of course the enormously successful group, Journey. However, recently Steve took a break in his wild schedule and had a chance to sit down and talk with us.

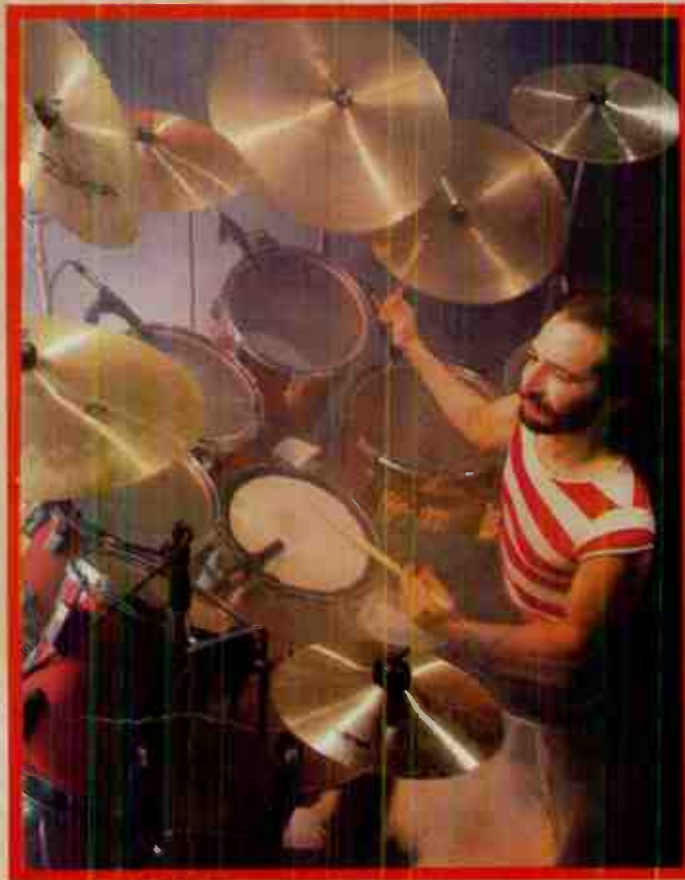
## On Starting Out.

"I started out playing in the fourth grade when I was nine years old and had a really good teacher. When I was in high school I got serious about playing and I got a job as a paper boy to save money to buy cymbals. My teacher used to bring me to the Zildjian factory so I could go in and pick out my own set of cymbals."

**On Rock and Roll.** "After college I had a lot of experience playing jazz and fusion and I had virtually no experience playing rock and roll professionally except for some high school rock things. I really wanted to follow that direction, because

nowadays a drummer has to play rock and roll as well as jazz in order to be well-rounded as a musician."

**On Zildjians.** "The kind of music we play with Journey demands a lot of power. I've found that the cymbals in the Zildjian rock line are the only ones that can



*Flying high with the success of Journey, Steve Smith is one of the most versatile and talented drummers in music today.*

really do the job for me — that can carry the big halls and not sound thin. Zildjian cymbals have extraordinary projection but at the same time they have this wonderful, full musical tone. I also particularly like the Ping Ride — I got my first one back in the eighth grade and I've been playing one ever since."

**On Career.** "You know if you should get into music. It's something you can just feel. If you have to ask yourself the question, then don't bother. Being a musician isn't just a career it's a way of life.

"I find that most successful musicians don't think about success as much as they think about being a good player or songwriter.

To try to focus on success is a little too contrived and usually just doesn't work."

If you're a serious drummer, chances are overwhelming that you, like Steve, are already playing Zildjians. Zildjian: a line of cymbals played by drummers on six continents — a line of cymbal-makers that spans three centuries.



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# Letters

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## ZIGGY VS. ZAPPA

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Thank you Timothy White, you lucky bastard, for a very fine interview with David Bowie. I always loved Bowie, and after reading your article, I found that I also liked Bowie. Oh, David, I have a suggestion if you're searching for someone else you can "fight" with creatively: Frank Zappa. What do you think?

Bob Larsen  
N. Waterford, ME

I was very pleased to see David Bowie on the cover of *Musician*. He's finally where he should have been all along. Timothy White did an excellent article on a person who is more than just Bowie. Mr. Bowie is a person of unbelievable knowledge, strength, talent, versatility and warmth; the man knows how to feel and how to make others feel. Timothy White deserves a pat on the back for his excellent work!

Susan Ledet  
Tampa, FL

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## REAL MEN DONT

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"Wow!" That pretty much sums up my feelings about U2 and that great article by Fred Schruers. The way he represented the Edge, Bono, Larry and Adam as "real" people rather than the typical drugged-out-guys-who-play-music was quite impressive. I even made my mom read it to prove to her that all musicians aren't, uh, "bad." Thanks for an informative and interesting piece.

Mary Jane Zarrella  
Munroeville, PA

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## REAL FURS DO

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Hooray! The Psychedelic Furs finally get the exposure they deserve. After all the one-sided, murderous reviews I have read, it was exciting to find an article which showed the Furs as they *really* are, instead of how a columnist *thinks* they are.

Louise Bach  
Milwaukee, WI

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## GEE, THANKS MA

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I would like to congratulate you on printing one of the finest interviews with my son, Todd Rundgren, that I have ever read. Please convey my sentiments to the writer, Bill Flanagan. The review of

Todd's latest album by David Fricke in the March issue was quite well done too. It indicated to me that you are current as well as having cognizant writers.

Ruth Rundgren  
Upper Darby, PA

Wo! What an issue! Your *May Musician* was superb... true music to the eyes. I have two articles left and my copy is already frayed at the edges. I could comprehend three good articles and a few mediocre ones, but Bowie, Adé, Jaco, Loggins and U2 all in one issue was almost too much for this bleary-eyed fan to deal with. Your magazine has gotten consistently better over the years. There are times when I disagree with points you make, but that is what good journalism is about.

Jay L. Mazur  
Brooklyn, NY

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## ACCURATE-LEE

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In Michael Goldberg's article on Albert Lee in the May issue, Lee is quoted as saying, "I did some research... I'm not sure about Peggy Lee, but most of the other Lees in this business have changed their names from something else."

Albert obviously didn't do his research carefully enough. Actually, I thought everyone *knew* that Peggy Lee's real name was Norma Deloris Egstrom. I'm not sure about Pinky Lee, though.

Peter Keepnews  
New York, NY

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## SKIP THE FASHION

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Concerning J.D. Considine's *Face* on Holly Beth Vincent: As a musician, I frankly am sick of reviewers' blatant sexist remarks. A magazine of your caliber need not have its critics and editors pay *quite* so much attention to female performers' clothes (and/or accessories). How about a little more attention towards Holly & the Italians' music? Believe me, sirs (since most of you are), I speak from experience.

Doreen Boulanger  
Girls Club  
Dallas, TX

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## SECOND OPINION

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Being a former Floridian, growing up in South Florida with Jaco, I'd like another point of view to be expressed. First, Jaco hasn't always been a wild man; he became good because he was straight as an arrow from 1969-1976, the formative years of his growth and development. Second, Jaco's greatness was achieved because of the awesome talent in South Florida; you had to become

great even to be able to play with the best. Jaco used to be a soulful egomaniac; now he's a victim of the coke-ego era; forget the soul, the white keeps his ego up and third-rate musicians support it. I mention this for the serious student of the bass, or any instrument, so they don't follow the wrong Pied Piper.

Jaco, I hope you wise up, for talent is a gift that should never be thrown away. I'd hate to hear your children say, "If Daddy was so smart (I.Q. 191), then why did he destroy himself?"

Peter J. McNally  
Greenwich, CT

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## THE GODS' REVENGE

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Who does Chip Stern think he is? I never put a lot of faith in his record reviewing acumen, but using a David Bowie review to take a swipe at Chris Stein and Debbie Harry, the best rock partnership since the Glimmer Twins or Ike & Tina—or both—pisses me off. Whom the gods would make assholes of, they grant the power to berate. I for one think the gray-haired picker-turned-entrepreneur deserves a story, with or without his "Howdy Doody" (any woman who can get a Penthouse cover without taking anything off is not a puppet). Who else would have the balls to start a record label and sign such expensive, esoteric talent as Iggy Pop, et al? Chip Stern? No, but it sounds close enough.

Bob LeBoutillier  
Olathe, KS

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## SLAM DUNK

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Yo! I like your style, I like your face, but your current direction is off the pace.

Each time I pass a newsstand, I have a look: Ooh, a new issue at last—damn, they did it again. Hey fellas, what's wrong? What happened to those fantastic interviews and enlightening features? Are they gone with the Bear? Your coverage of jazz is about as close as I could stick to Mo Cheeks. I hope your punk steps in some funk. I hope a rock falls on your head, the music ain't dead.

You're looking silly in Philly. Peace.  
M. Carabello  
Philadelphia, PA

*The editors, in their infinite wisdom, changed J.D. Considine's spelling of Wall of Voodoo's Stan Ridgway (page 12) to Ridgeway, corresponding to the spelling on the back of Two Songs. At press time we discovered that Ridgway is in fact correct. Who can you trust?*

*Last month we neglected to thank Sam Ash Music of New York for graciously loaning us the equipment photographed in the Home Recording Special.*





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# Memories of Muddy

BY PETER GURALNICK

The first time I saw Muddy Waters, he was playing on a concert bill at Hunter College in New York City. It was 1964, I think, and my friends and I drove down from Boston because we figured that this might be the only chance we would ever get to see him. I remember the performers ahead of Muddy were mostly folk-oriented (Cousin Joe from New Orleans and Mississippi John Hurt, among others), lost on the big stage. When Muddy came on, it was as if the revolution had arrived. There he stood in his shiny polyester suit, his hair set in a giant conk, and he *commanded* that stage. The band, with Otis Spann on piano and James Cotton on harp, seemed to thunder, though God knows the sound from those little amps would pale next to that of any band today. And Muddy, when he declared that he had a black cat bone and a mojo too, when he tilted his head to one side, assumed that quizzically stolid look, and roared out, "I just want to make love to you"—Muddy was absolutely masterful. On the last number of the set (not surprisingly, it was "Got My Mojo Working" Parts 1 and 2), he corkscrewed out one leg, hitched up his pants and abandoned himself to a stately jitterbug, dancing with a curious concentration all the more remarkable in so blocky and seemingly ungainly a man. The crowd predictably went wild, and we went back to Boston thrilled with the knowledge that we had seen Muddy Waters at least once in our lifetime.

Muddy's fame became a little more widespread over the next few years, of course. When I first met him in 1969, Muddy had reached the crest of his popularity and was recovering from a near-crippling automobile accident. At home, speaking quietly and wearing a do-rag on his head, he was still a man of enormous dignity, gracious, reserved, scarcely discomfited by this latest intrusion. He talked about the peculiar difficulties of life off the road: "I love to travel. I ain't been home like this in years. Ordinarily, you come home, the time slips by like it's no time. But this, it kind of gets on your nerves." With his high Indian cheekbones, striking, almost oriental features and an impassive expression that served to mask his response, he

carried himself with the majesty of a king.

I saw Muddy lots of times over the years, both on and offstage. I don't think I ever saw him again, though, the way that I remember him from that first show at Hunter College. This was the rough-and-ready Muddy that you heard about in conversation, with tales of guns bran-



DAVID GAHR

dished and quarrels conclusively adjudicated. This was the Muddy who came out of the Delta juke joints, who played the Memphis WDIA Goodwill Revue, whom writer Stanley Booth described as "wearing an iridescent aquamarine sapphire silk suit, huge green-and-white jeweled cuff links and matching pinky diamonds." This was the Muddy who played to crowds that *knew* what a "mojo hand" really was.

To his audience of the 60s—young, white and reverential—Muddy presented himself quite differently. He learned to play off this audience just as effectively as he had his earlier one, and in some ways his program became more adventurous. Still, there was often a sense of removal that did little to lessen the mystery. You could always find Muddy holding court backstage after any performance, drinking champagne and accepting questions and praise from his eager young acolytes. He became a benign ruler by neglect, a

kind of Dutch uncle of the blues, universally hailed, universally acknowledged, but somehow apart. One of the few times I saw him brought out of himself was just after the album *More Real Folk Blues* had been released in 1966. A friend of mine played the album for Muddy at Harvard radio station WHRB. It was the first Muddy had seen of the record, a collection of some of his earliest sides, and it obviously stimulated both his engagement and his imagination. His performance at Club 47 later that night included songs and open tunings that he probably hadn't employed in years, deeply felt versions of obscure numbers like "Anna Mae" and "Working On The High Line" that all but dispensed with the support of the band. That was still another Muddy Waters.

He always put on a professional show. He wasn't like his self-proclaimed arch-rival, the Howlin' Wolf, in this respect; the set was planned, the band was unlikely to be fired on stage, the surprises were few and far between. If you hadn't seen him before it was always uplifting and inspiring. At the same time, it wasn't always *inspired*, a criticism that could never be made of Wolf. In later years, the bands were somewhat less than full-tilt too, as Muddy—despite a deserved reputation for nurturing the very greatest Chicago blues players—proved himself too much of a pragmatist, or perhaps too much of a democrat, to limit the soloing of some of the more workaday members. His records too, grew lackluster in the late 60s and early 70s. That was why it was so exciting when he signed with the Blue Sky label in 1977 and made a record in the old style under the direction of one of his better-known proteges, Johnny Winter. The title of that album, *Hard Again*, says it all (The music felt so good, said the sixty-two-year-old Waters with delicacy, "that it made my little pee-pee hard again"), and over the next few years he embarked on several triumphant world tours with Winter.

It was a long way from Rolling Fork, Mississippi, where Muddy was born McKinley Morganfield sixty-eight years ago. It was another world altogether from the one in which his music grew up, a world of gin mills and innocent pleasures, fish sandwiches for a nickel, sudden explosions of violence and joy,

*continued on page 106*

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## CHAPTER II

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# Wall of Voodoo

## *Oddballs Amok in the Melting Pot*

PAUL MATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE



Wallflowers: Joe Nanini, Marc Moreland, Stan Ridgway, Chas Gray and Bill Noland...

### **BY J.D. CONSIDINE**

Marty Robbins has just ridden back into El Paso to see his beloved Felina, and is met instead by a vengeful posse. The lights go down as he falls from the saddle. He rises, sees the white puff of smoke from the rifle and feels the bullet go deep in his chest, but before his beloved Felina can find him, Wall of Voodoo have taken the stage and lurch into "Ring Of Fire."

This sudden shift of gears seems a bit too much for some of the leather-clad rock fans at the University of Maryland's Ritchie Coliseum tonight. They are there for a rock show, and instead they get a gunfighter ballad first, then what appears to be the lounge band from: the

Twilight Zone. Standing amidst a stage set that includes the door to Dr. Caligari's cabinet and a drum kit at least partially made from pots and pans, the five members of Wall of Voodoo seem strangely at home. Guitarist Marc Moreland, wearing a field hand's Stetson, vest and string tie, plays with elbows out, bouncing from the knee as if at a square dance; percussionist Joe Nanini, at the other end of the stage, crouches intently over a microphone with a ratchet and triangle. At mid-stage, Chas T. Gray and Bill Nolan hunch over their synthesizers like accountants venting their spleen on the office adding machines, while singer Stanard Ridgway, front and center, jabs at the air with his cigarette while tartly intoning, "I went down, down, down, and the flames got higher." Behind him, More-

land's guitar twangs darkly and the synthesizers pulse and hum.

As one of the characters in a Wall of Voodoo song puts it, "You're a long way off from yippee yi yay...."

But then, that's kind of the point. If the blend of styles seems unsettlingly diverse, it's because it's supposed to be. As Ridgway says after the band's set, "Wall of Voodoo is very much a potpourri of styles. The best way I know to describe it is to compare it to L.A., where it's all a kind of borrowed culture—there's no inherent culture of its own. Everything has come from some other place to be there. You walk around and you see a building with a Spanish roof and Grecian columns, a Turkish fountain in the front yard with an Irishman living inside. So by nature of L.A.'s incongruity of styles, a style emerges.

"I really think that's what we do."

It would go a long way toward explaining the odd layering of textures and ideas in their music. Although Wall of Voodoo uses a lot of synthesizers and drum machines, their music doesn't even begin to suggest the clichés of electropop. Part of it is a matter of personal style, part a matter of composition. For instance, when Joe Nanini relies on electronic percussion, it isn't a Linn-Drum he uses but the sort of drum machine that sounds like the inside of an old grandfather clock. The idea is to emphasize the mechanical aspect of the sound—as Ridgway says, "It never really made much sense to me to think of the rhythm machine as anything else other than an appliance"—but it also allows Nanini to add in extra layers of rhythm and color, which he pulls from such paraphernalia as Chinese wood blocks, a set of carefully-tuned frying pans and an elaborately misshapen cymbal.

Stylistic influences are juxtaposed in much the same way. Take the band's obvious country overtones; despite Marc Moreland's heavy twang and cowboy duds, there's very little in the Wall of Voodoo sound catalog that would attract

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much interest on Music Row in Nashville, unless it's the band's use of Marty Robbins' "El Paso" as entrance music. There's also a certain amount of Ennio Morricone, the soundtrack composer who gave us the music to *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* and *Once Upon A Time In The West*, in that guitar and in Ridgeway's mournful harmonica, but here again, the resemblance is fragmentary, especially on their recent breakthrough single, "Mexican Radio." Wall of Voodoo's dense, sophisticated harmonies, occasional polytonality and sturdy new wave dancebeat tend to overpower specifics, until the best way to put it would be to suggest that had Weather Report come out of C&W instead of jazz, they might have sounded like Wall of Voodoo.

"I've always loved that music too much to think that I could actually do it whole-heartedly as a country artist," Ridgeway confesses. "You really need foundation for that. If you don't have it, I think you come off as a bit of a dilettante, so I'm not interested in taking those influences and wearing them on my sleeve. The important thing is taking the essence of those influences into what you do, to try and come up with something different for yourself."

Wall of Voodoo started out as something different. "Joe and I used to play in a lot of lounge bands," recalls Ridgeway. "Places like the Three Little Pigs in South Whittier, the bars with chicken wire around them. We played all kinds of different things—jazz, country & western . . . . But that got to be a real pain,

making a living at music playing things you didn't particularly want to play. It got to be like being a plumber or something. So that's when we struck on the idea of being a soundtrack company."

It sounds logical enough—they were living in Los Angeles, land of movie stars, million dollar deals and instant fame—until you consider their methodology. "We would write specifically for films that hadn't even been finished yet," says Ridgeway. "We figured we would submit the music, and they would say, 'Well, maybe these guys have something here.'"

"That was a bit naive," he adds, a masterpiece of understatement, "but it established a reputation for us around L.A. doing this kind of stuff, whatever we did. Whatever we do now. . . ."

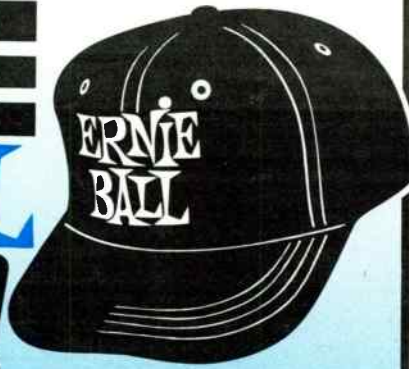
The soundtrack company was formed in 1977; a year and a half later Wall of Voodoo was a band, and by 1980 they had released their first EP, *Wall of Voodoo*, on Index Records (which would later be picked up by I.R.S.). There were two standout tracks on that record, the first a misfit love song called "Can't Make Love," the second a remake of the Johnny Cash hit "Ring Of Fire" which became the group's first single.

As Ridgeway explains, "Ring Of Fire" was chosen because "we wanted to do a song that was not our own to illustrate what certain Wall of Voodoo approaches were to music. People would be able to match up the original version of said song to our performance, and they'd be able to compare, to say, 'Oh, I see what their approach is.'"

"The thing we found out after we did 'Ring Of Fire' was that a lot of people *didn't* know the song in the original, and so they thought we wrote it." He gives a wry smile. "We had to keep saying, 'No, this is a June Carter / Merle Kilgore song, Johnny Cash recorded it. . . .' I guess Johnny Cash wasn't really that hip then."

On the other hand, Ridgeway's delivery is so distinctive, it's not too hard to understand the mistake. Instead of the Man in Black's resonant baritone croon, Ridgeway presents each line with a tartness that falls somewhere between Waylon Jennings and a standup comedian. Not that Ridgeway is taking a poke at country singing—"I never approach any kind of style from parody," he says earnestly—just that this is the best he can do. "In the beginning, I didn't really want to be the singer in this band," he says. "I just wanted to play guitar and keyboards. If we were going to be a band, then we were going to find a singer. I'm really the Ethel Merman of Wall of Voodoo in a lot of ways; I don't really sing so much as I babble a lot. But we looked around for a singer for three or four months, and we couldn't find anybody in L.A. Nobody could get a handle on this at all. Not that it was outrageous; they just thought it was extremely lame for them to do. They desperately wanted

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to be Iggy Squiggy with the ten foot mike cord, and this was not going to bring them that kind of presentation. So in the end, the other guys in the band said, 'Stan, why don't you do it.'

He shrugs and adds, "I feel a little inadequate, but I think I'll get better. I'm learning a lot more about what my voice can and cannot do. Considering the characters or the people's situations I sing from, it's becoming very interesting for me. I hadn't anticipated it getting this interesting."

Indeed, the lyrics are one of the best things about Wall of Voodoo. "Animal Day," from the group's first album, *Dark Continent*, starts off sounding like a spoof: "Grandma is a rhino, my brother is a dog/I can tell it's animal day, because my best friend turned into a frog." But by the song's end, "My pet is calling me Rover, deers are hunting for humans/ Seals keep crushing our heads, animals betting on us at the track." Some joke. Then there's "Lost Weekend" from the latest album, which finds a married couple driving out of Las Vegas after a losing spree: "Maybe I should have stayed in school," he said/ "Yeah, I know —start your own business cleaning swimming pools," she said." Or the hit, "Mexican Radio," which observes, "I hear the talking of the DJ/ Can't understand, just what does he say?"

"People say our songs are weird," says Ridgeway defensively. "They're not weird to me. Maybe they're unusual because a lot of people don't do that, but that's precisely why I find them valuable for me. I don't like to be in somebody else's room—I like to have my own room. I don't like to contribute to all the sameness that's around. To me, talent, imagination, skill are all things that take a lot of hard work. If you don't keep working at something or practicing something, you're not going to get anywhere on it. When I'm writing, I'll sit in a room for days with a piece of paper, occasionally stepping out to eat or look at the sky or something, until I'm satisfied with what I've come up with. Because my ego is such that I'm the one I'm trying to impress."

In the end, Ridgeway feels that the greatest strength any musician can have is commitment, and cites one of his heroes as an example. "Take those Ennio Morricone records, where you've got six Italian men standing around a microphone in a recording studio, all going, 'Ho! Hah! Ho-Ha-Huh!' I mean, what allows those people to do that? This is the most ridiculous thing you could possibly imagine, Ennio Morricone writing things in his score that call for women to laugh or shriek at a certain note.

"The only thing that allows people to do that is their whole-hearted commitment to music. Then you get emotional about it, and you can make anything work." 



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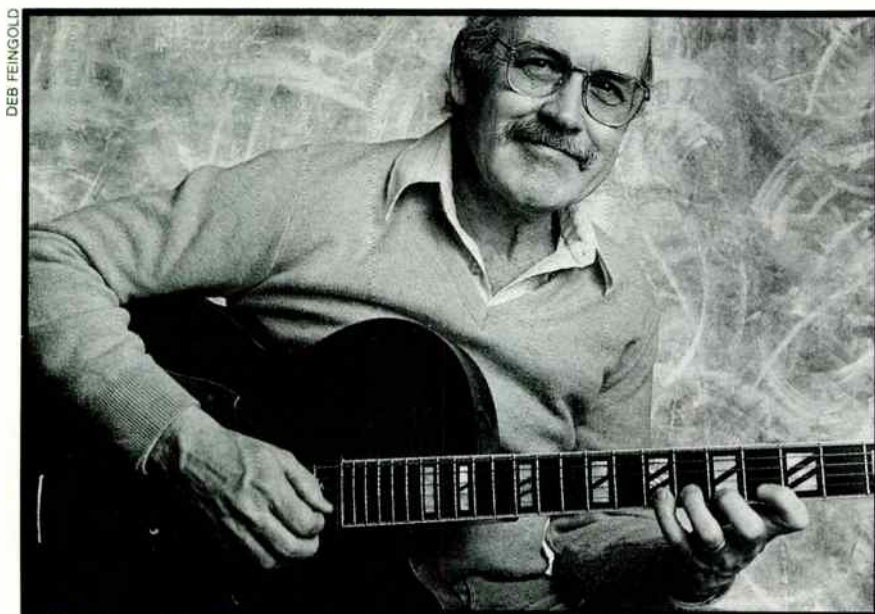
Produced by Tony Banks.

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# Jim Hall

## *A Jazz Statesman's Quiet Intensity*



DEB FEINGOLD

Unassuming Hall, "the favorite guitarist of many who agree on little else in music."

### **BY FRANCIS DAVIS**

"You start off with an ideal, and mine was to one day be able to play a solo that sounded as satisfying to me as any solo by Charlie Christian," remembers Jim Hall, the unassuming, mild-mannered type once extolled by the late Paul Desmond as "the favorite guitarist of many people who agree on little else in music." Desmond was probably referring to musicians as discriminating in taste and as different from one another in orientation as himself, Sonny Rollins, Ron Carter, Bill Evans, Chico Hamilton, Ella Fitzgerald, Lee Konitz, Hampton Hawes, John Lewis, Gunther Schuller, Ornette Coleman, Jimmy Giuffre, Bob Brookmeyer, Art Farmer, Red Mitchell, Pat Metheny and Itzak Perlman—to name just a few of those who have enlisted Jim Hall's services over the years.

Unless they had been given the opportunity to listen to him play beforehand, the celebrity panelists on the old

*What's My Line?* would have had an awful time deducing the occupation of the bespectacled, prematurely bald young man who glances out so timidly from the cover of Jim Hall's first record as a leader, circa 1958. The ripening effects of early middle age, together with cosmetic improvements like wire-rims and a hefty walrus moustache, have since given Hall a more tousled, more unbuttoned look, though one's first impression of him even now might have him earning his living with a ledger sheet or a stethoscope or a rosary rather than with a pick.


But in fact Hall is the doyen of contemporary jazz guitarists, and within hailing distance of such all-time greats as Christian, Reinhardt, Pass and Montgomery. He is an electric guitarist frequently applauded by purists for regarding amplification as nothing more than a necessary evil: "Amplification enables me to play more *quietly* than I would otherwise," is the way Hall himself explains it, "and, hopefully, within that

lower volume, I can draw a wider range of dynamic shadings out of the guitar." Hall's soft attack and veiled, underwater tone do indeed make for quiet music, but only the most decibel-jaded listener could mistake his lack of volume for a lack of intensity; few soloists are as limber or as decisive as Hall in negotiating their way over or around an implied or insistent beat. Hall is also a tactful and giving accompanist, a faithful and lucid interpreter of ballads, a driven yet always unhurried animator of uptempo blues.

He is also a man who has learned to accept praise graciously over the years, though praise still puzzles him. "I've never really thought of myself as much of a blues player," he says, "but if you say I am, maybe it's because a person sounds convincing when he plays the blues only if he says something personal, and that's what I try to do all the time. It just comes out more on the blues, I guess."

Where Hall's spacious, almost rural feeling for the blues comes from is something of a mystery, because he is both city born (Buffalo, N.Y., 1930) and bred (Cleveland, Ohio). The first guitar he cradled in his arms when he was ten years old belonged to his uncle. "By the time I was twelve or thirteen, I was playing in this quartet in junior high—clarinet, accordion, drums and guitar. The clarinetist owned some Benny Goodman records, and that's how I first heard Charlie Christian. Whatever he was doing just spoke to me." Even now, a magazine cover photo of Christian occupies a permanent position of honor alongside the sheet music on the piano in Hall's home workroom.

"Anyway, from hearing Christian I got caught up in what I soon found out was jazz, and without knowing how bad it sounded I kept twanging away in little groups. I was leading this double life. In high school, I was class president and all that, then on weekends I was playing saloons with musicians nine or ten years older than me, which is a big difference



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when you're fifteen. Gradually, I found other influences, most of whom were not guitarists—I liked Art Tatum's fearlessness about chords, and I was drawn to Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, possibly because I sensed that Christian had been influenced by saxophonists too."

After earning a B.A. in music theory and beginning to work toward a master's in composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music, "It dawned on me that everyone I knew at school was a perpetual student. You went to school forever, then you got a job at a school. Part of me was headed that way, but another part of me wanted to see if I could cut it as a player. Also, I had this Viennese composition teacher who scared the hell out of me. So, when a friend of mine told me he was delivering this car to Los Angeles, I decided to go with him. I had an aunt who lived out there, so I would at least have a couch to sleep on if nothing else came through.

"I wound up moving to New York around 1960 because it seemed like I was coming here all the time anyway with the bands I was invited to join out on the West Coast." Hall's first trip east was with the Chico Hamilton Quintet. "It was pretty intimidating. We played Basin Street opposite the Max Roach-Clifford Brown group, and people like Bud Powell and Errol Garner were in the audience. But everyone was very encouraging to me, and I felt like I was being accepted into this secret fraternity of musicians. The emphasis on strings in Chico's group (which also included a cello) meant I wasn't buried underneath everything the way guitarists usually are. I was always fortunate to be in groups where it was possible to hear everything the guitar was doing."

The next showcase for Hall was the Jimmy Giuffre Three, a monastic ensemble consisting, at one point, of Bob Brookmeyer's valve trombone, Hall's guitar, and the leader's clarinet. "Jimmy thought in terms of getting three independent melody lines going at once, with the rhythm taking care of itself." In practice, however, the guitarist functioned as a kind of one-man rhythm section, supplying harmonic color and rhythmic impetus.

Playing in Sonny Rollins' group for a year and a half beginning in 1962 was an even greater challenge. "The man's imagination is staggering. You stand up there right next to him as he plays his solo, and you still can't believe it. Then it's your turn to play, and you think 'Jesus, now what?' It really made me come to grips with the fact that there were things I'd never be able to play if I practiced for the rest of my life. But it also started me thinking about form. I still sometimes approach a solo the way I think Sonny might, taking a simple motif and expanding it until it's not so simple anymore, trying to do that without sound-

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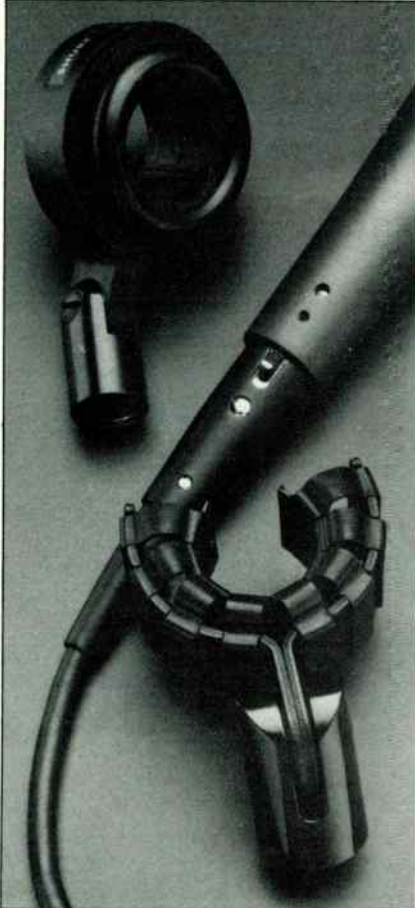
ing studied, because Sonny surely never sounds studied or mechanical.

"Sonny had a profound effect on me personally as well. I was going through my heavy drinking period then, and while Sonny never said 'shape up' to me in so many words, he set an example by being completely straight and clear-headed and still playing all these outrageous things."

Hall's drinking problem drove him off the road for a few years in the mid-60s. "I think I was chemically predisposed to becoming an alcoholic, but a lot of it was psychological too. Being on the go all the time, I needed liquor to settle me down, help me concentrate and increase my feelings of camaraderie. I had gotten to the point where I believed I couldn't play at all if I didn't drink, but exactly the opposite was true. I'd get so drunk, I could hardly play.

"After I joined A.A., I was actually afraid to walk into a nightclub for several years. I started worrying what I could do instead, so I started taking students. I taught privately for a while until it became obvious that... well, I don't want to say I wasn't a good teacher, because I'm sure I helped the people who came to me possessed of all the gifts. But I couldn't teach someone *how* to play guitar or *how* to improvise if my life depended on it. I had no system. Plus, I never knew what to charge for a lesson, and some people I felt funny charging at all. Even now, I'm uncomfortable in the few clinic situations I agree to do in colleges. You know how it is, the students get all excited about music and start asking you questions. I have to tell them that on the subject of music, I still have nothing but questions myself."

The answers Jim Hall was seeking weren't in teaching, nor in the staff position he took with *The Merv Griffin Show* orchestra in 1967, a job that at least enabled Hall to put his personal life in order for the first time. When Merv abandoned New York for the greener pastures of Hollywood in 1971, Hall—demons finally subdued—remained in Manhattan. He's been back on the international club and festival circuit since then, though not at the grueling pace that once nearly did him in. He usually takes to the road with a bassist and drummer in tow—either Harvie Swartz and Ben Riley or Don Thompson and Terry Clarke, the nonpareil Canadian rhythm team featured on *Circles*, Hall's first LP under a long-term contract with Concord Jazz. Within New York, Hall is also heard frequently in a duet setting, most recently with Ron Carter, the bassist with whom he recorded the sublimely empathetic *Alone Together* ten years ago. "Ron has asked me to play longer guitar solos and not worry about there being a bass solo on every tune," Hall says, "which has resulted in even more spontaneous two-part invention between



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**GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD**, hello Great Wall of China. Sino-Rock relations are at an all-time high following Elton John's two-week stay in China, on the soccer trail with his Watford Hornets. *Too Low For Zero* is Elton's latest, a collection of ten original songs—including "I'm Still Standing"—written by Elton and Bernie Taupin, with Davey Johnstone on guitars, Dee Murray on bass and Nigel Olsson on drums. In the words of Someone Famous, "Rarely have so few given so much to so many." On Geffen...

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**ALBUM TITLE OF THE MONTH AWARD** goes to Joe ("Life's Been Good To Me") Walsh for his first Full Moon/Warner Bros. release. *You Bought It—You Name It*. Available on record, cassette and the 6x12 cassette package (which we intend to keep mentioning until your friends start buying), it's Joe's seventh solo LP—in addition to the James Gang and Eagles releases graced by his guitar, vocal and songwriting skills. Listen for "Space Age Whiz Kids."

**WOULD JULUKA THAT!!!** The members of Juluka cancel a date with Sam on the latest episode of *The Adventures of the Warner Bros.*, airing this month on MTV. Why did they cancel? Who are they? And why is Burbank so excited about Juluka? Just thought we'd ask...

**THE WINNING ENTRY** in the "Name Marshall Crenshaw's Date" contest was submitted by a Sheriff Honey Dew of Minneapolis. Ms. Dew will receive a copy of Marshall's second album, *Field Day*, and photostats of his favorable reviews, shipped collect. Steve Lillywhite (U-2) produced

*Field Day*, which features nine original tunes—including "Whenever You're On My Mind"—and a remake of the Jive Five's "What Time Is It?"

**ROCK AND ROLL NEVER FORGETS**, but it frequently has a foggy memory. Real rock releases this month include

Foghat's *Zig-Zag Walk* and DIO's debut album, *Holy Diver*. DIO is the creation of Ronnie James Dio, who describes the sound of *Holy Diver* as "more melodic than what I did with Black Sabbath." Meanwhile, Foghat accomplishes the near-impossible on *Zig-Zag Walk*—the group has updated its (always innovative) rock, and created a new Foghat sound. "That's What Love Can Do," on Bearsville.

**RANDY NEWMAN IS NOT ALONE**. The Plimsouls also love L.A. The Plimsouls are So. Cal. favorites; they scored a radio and sales hit last year with "A Million Miles Away," a tune they've included (substantially reworked) on their Geffen LP debut. The Plimsouls are appearing *Everywhere At Once*—look for videos and concerts.

**RUB ROD THE RIGHT WAY**, and he'll grant you three Body Wishes. Rod Stewart's first studio album in almost two years, *Body Wishes* has what "Baby Jane" wants. A major worldwide tour will land Rod in this country early in '84—in the meantime, watch for the MTV descendants of "Young Turks," judged best video of '82 at the American Video Awards.

**BENSON AND CARLTON ON SMOKING GUITARS...** George Benson and Larry Carlton take on the Surgeon General this month with a couple of very hot guitars. Larry is a session man; on *Friends* he's joined by the likes of Michael Brecker, Al Jarreau, B.B. King and Toto's Jeff Porcaro. George's new release (we're giving subliminal print advertising one last chance: buy the 6x12 cassette package...liner notes...extended songs...same price...) is titled *In Your Eyes*; the single is "Inside Love (So Personal)."

**PETER GABRIEL AND PAT METHENY IN CONCERT**. No, we didn't say the same concert. Both are releasing live double LPs from recent outings. The *Pat Metheny Group's Travels* (on ECM) was recorded in Dallas, Philadelphia, Sacramento and Nacogdoches (the one in Texas); featuring old and new material, it's an ideal Metheny primer and a must for aficionados. *Peter Gabriel Plays Live* (on Geffen) was recorded in four Midwestern cities, including Normal (the one in Illinois). The album is not.

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us. Very little of what we play is pre-planned, except maybe for an ending we've agreed on or an overall format for a tune. Like all my favorite players, Ron's a guy you're not afraid to be spontaneous with, because you know he's always *listening* to you. Listening is still the key."

Hall voices alarm at the emphasis younger musicians of all persuasions place on "making it big." "I hope I don't sound like one of these old guys grumbling about 'these kids today,' but I've met so many twenty-one-year-old guitarists who have financed their own tapes and then want to get out of music when nothing much happens with them commercially. When I was a kid, 'making it' meant playing a good solo when it was your turn to play. Then you'd have to come back and 'make it' all over again on the next tune. Music's not the stock market. When you decide to become a musician, you're not tossing the dice seeing if you'll get a hit record. You're in it for life.

"I hear a lot of young guitarists striving for the same things I'm after, but I think that's just the direction music's headed in and has nothing to do with me. Clarity is the thing I'm after—I want a picture in my mind of the way a solo looks as I'm playing it. That way I can keep it from becoming boring. I get bored very easily, and I think that's one thing that helps me avoid clichés. I think that whether anyone likes it or not, I've figured out a way of playing jazz on the guitar that's all my own, through a long process of trial and error. I don't know if it's good or bad, but I do know it's all mine."

Hall is usually unruffled by most of the world's slights, but bristles at any suggestion that there are better ways he might spend the rest of his life than strumming a guitar: "Janey is a psychotherapist (as Jane Herbert, she is also the composer of some of the most attractive themes her husband has recorded), so many of the people we see socially are therapists and analysts. We spent a day out in the country once with two of Janey's colleagues, and one of them asked me if I've ever thought of settling down and doing something meaningful with my life. It was like she was asking me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I tried to give her a sociable answer, but I was seething inside. I wanted to say, 'look, lady, have you ever thought of giving up your practice to become a hooker? I'll be a jazz musician all my life. Being in the same profession

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as Duke Ellington and Charlie Parker isn't exactly slumming, you know!"

#### JIM HALL'S EQUIPMENT

Hall owns "two guitars Jimmy D'Aquisto made for me, one a regular acoustic, the other a classical guitar with a smaller neck—some people would call it a jazz neck—because I don't have the fingers to wrap around a classical neck.

"Jimmy also made me an electric guitar that played like butter but didn't have enough rhythm sound. So I sent it back, and he's making me another one. In the meantime, the old Gibson electric I've had for ages is the instrument I usually play. I'm an *electric* guitarist at heart.

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# L A P P

## Scene Power, a Desperate Vitality



DEB FEINGOLD

Reckless, hard-humored rock 'n' rollers the Dream Syndicate, L.A.'s best new band.

### BY MIKAL GILMORE

This is a true story.

It is a smog-bound, gray-brown winter afternoon in Los Angeles and you are driving to work. Taking the long straight drive down La Brea to where it sidewinds into the Santa Monica Freeway East, then taking that dull, stretchy drive—

through cities within cities that you never see because they exist off the highway—to the towering, empty district that is Downtown. There isn't much to hear on the radio in this sprawling wasteland, just the cloying quirky style of synth-sex-pop that made KROQ such an anomalous success. But you listen anyway. It's a long drive.

After back-to-back tuneless come-ons by such current L.A. staples as Berlin, Missing Persons and, um, Killer Pussy, the early evening DJ—his voice all cocky with recently acquired new wave hipness—says a few words that perk your interest. "We've been reading a lot about this new L.A. band the Dream Syndicate," he begins. "I haven't heard anything by them yet, but we believe in giving new bands a chance at KROQ, so here goes."

With that, "Halloween"—from the group's recent debut album *The Days Of Wine And Roses*—blares from the car speakers. It's a frictional, slow-moving-but-exciting sound, unlike anything you've heard yet on this station. It reminds you of the sense of daring that made you fall in love with rock 'n' roll in the first place, that sense of inquiring emotion that can pin you like a bolt of recognition. There are flashes of the Velvet Underground, Television and white noise Rolling Stones in the collision of guitars and the hard uncompromising beat and . . . and . . . and all of a sudden, it's gone. After only thirty seconds of this rapturous cacophony, it disappears with soundless abruptness.

The DJ fumbles his way back on the air, his voice palpable with anger. "That's all I need to hear," he says. "I like to give new local bands a chance, but this is ridiculous. You won't be hearing more of that band on this station."

And indeed, I never do.

I tell this story to Steve Wynn—songwriter, singer and rhythm guitarist for the Dream Syndicate, Los Angeles' best new band—while we're sitting one day at a hamburger stand on Santa Monica Boulevard. He looks wonderstruck and then just shakes his head, laughing mirthlessly.

"God, that's wonderful," he says. "To think that we could disturb somebody who's supposed to be as aware of 'new music' as these people are supposed to be . . ." He lets the thought trail off into a bemused smile.

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"At least we won't be overexposed," he says after a while, laughing. "When it comes down to it," he continues, "it's not as if we're Throbbing Gristle or the Virgin Prunes. We're really just a pop band, not one of those groups out to make an art statement. We're playing songs—songs with hooks—taking these little ditties, pumping them with as much emotion as we can, filling them with all the pop history we know, seeing how far they'll go before they break. We're not that unusual."

What is unusual is that they are not alone. Besides the Dream Syndicate, there are lively 60s revisionists the Bangles, hardcore warriors the Minutemen and the Descendants, and other chart fringe upstarts like Green On Red,

the Three O'Clock and Red Kross, to name only six such bands, not all playing Dream Syndicate music but transmitting that same special quality, drawing on a rarefied pop energy and radiating an enviable, exhilarating faith in its power to transform... something, somehow. What is even more unusual is that hardened Easterners and underground cynics do not expect to find this kind of accelerating scene power, such convincing faith in mere music, in Los Angeles, a place that usually takes the styles (and nuances of style) of other movements and hard-earned breakthroughs and follows them to their logical, over worked extremes. Yet here it is and it is gathering strength with every new record released, every new band formed.

This is not the first time this has happened. A year or less ago, any number of pop pundits (the most assertive of whom, interestingly, originated out of the Boston/N.Y. critical coterie) were designating Los Angeles as perhaps the most vital of American pop music scenes, the place where a creative community seemed to cohere and collide around real issues of form and theme. After all, it was the city where punk rock had taken its most forcible stand, as if a pack of self-styled gutter-snipes were hell-bent on defacing L.A.'s pacific gloss or simply underscoring the city's balled-up artistic and ethical climate. It was also the city that spawned the Go-Go's and X—two bands that appeared to signify the counterbalancing concerns of desperate decadence and quick fun that have long been part of this city's moral and aesthetic temperament. Of course, L.A. is also the city that launched the Blasters as the finest and toughest exemplars of what revivalism might mean if it were to mean something more than stylish wistfulness.

That media foofaraw quickly passed. The city is no longer in the midst of a punk movement; the Go-Go's *Vacation* only showed how tepid and dispensable a surface-notion of "quick fun" might be reduced to; X's major label debut *Under The Big Black Sun* sold disappointingly. Maybe what this means is that Los Angeles can simply get back to the business of being a large small town, nearly always on the verge of cultural resentment (both within and without its community) as well as on the edge of aesthetic desperation. Some of us think that's when this city produces its most vital entertainment, not to mention its most interesting art. Indeed, for my taste, there's more pop of genuine merit and musical durability being produced here now than at any time since the much-ballyhooed initial onslaught of late-70s punk.

"It's weird how all these bands came up within three months of each other," notes Steve Wynn, citing close Dream Syndicate pals like the Three O'Clock, the Bangles, Green On Red and the Rain Parade. "But there's a reason for it. The average age in these groups is twenty-one. These people weren't at the old L.A. punk clubs, they didn't see the Germs, they're too young to remember the 60s. They didn't go through all these passing L.A. fads. So they didn't have this attitude that 'Oh, there's nothing you can do, it's all over.' These people still believe you can achieve something by being in a band."

In many ways, the central event—and dividing line—in recent L.A. pop history was the hardcore punk movement. It revealed how vehement, effective and meaningful an idiom local rock 'n' roll might still be, and it demonstrated how the effect of that music might still inspire

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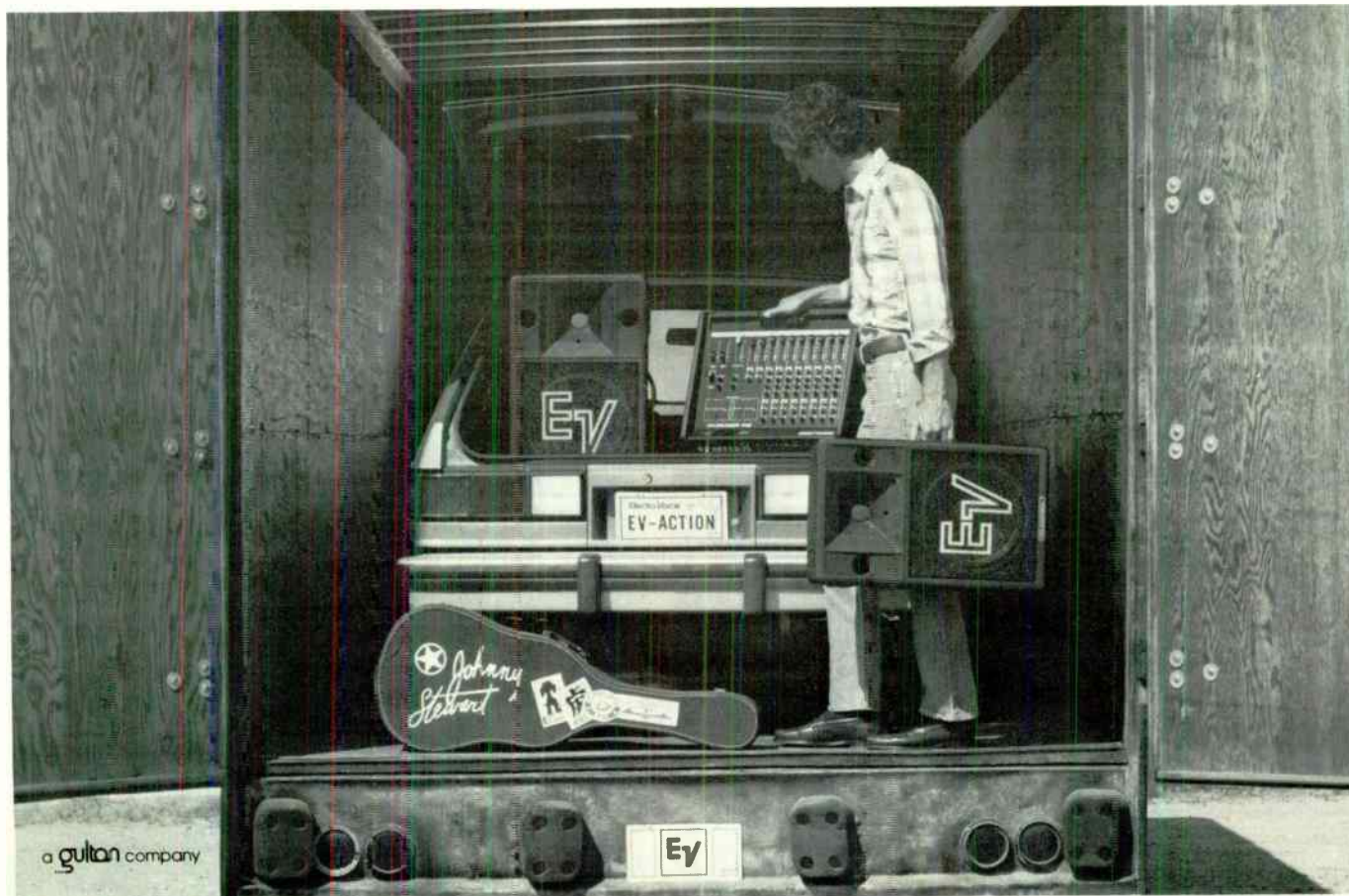
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or at least contain notions of tenuous youth community. But the narrow way in which so many of L.A.'s hardcore bands interpreted the punk aesthetic (adjectives like "fake," "fatuous," "unrewarding" and "studiedly stupid" come to mind) has pretty much reduced the music to a device of unwitting self-parody.

Still, much of Los Angeles' current hardcore music can have an exciting impact. Clearly, the best of local punk bands is not, as has been so widely supposed in New York and London, Black Flag, but instead the Minutemen—a thuggish-looking, three-man outfit from San Pedro who have been part of the scene nearly since its inception, though they've only recently been accepted here as a force. In the last eighteen months, they've released what are probably the two most impelling of all American hardcore albums (and perhaps the most inventive punk-style recordings since the Clash's debut LP): *The Punch Line* and *What Makes A Man Start Fires*. They are politically and musically involving work, full of quick, hard thinking, and quicker, harder tempo changes.

But as exciting as those records are, they don't begin to prepare you for how brutally innovative and thrilling this band is live.

Onstage, the Minutemen don't seem immediately impressive. Two of the

musicians—guitarist D. Boon and drummer George Hurley—are physically bulky guys, and neither appear to have the springiness necessary to animate the group's kinetic sound. But from the first report of the drums the night I saw them at a stylish little hole-in-the-wall called the Anti-Club, they played their music as if it were a frenzied beast to be wrestled and liberated at the same time.

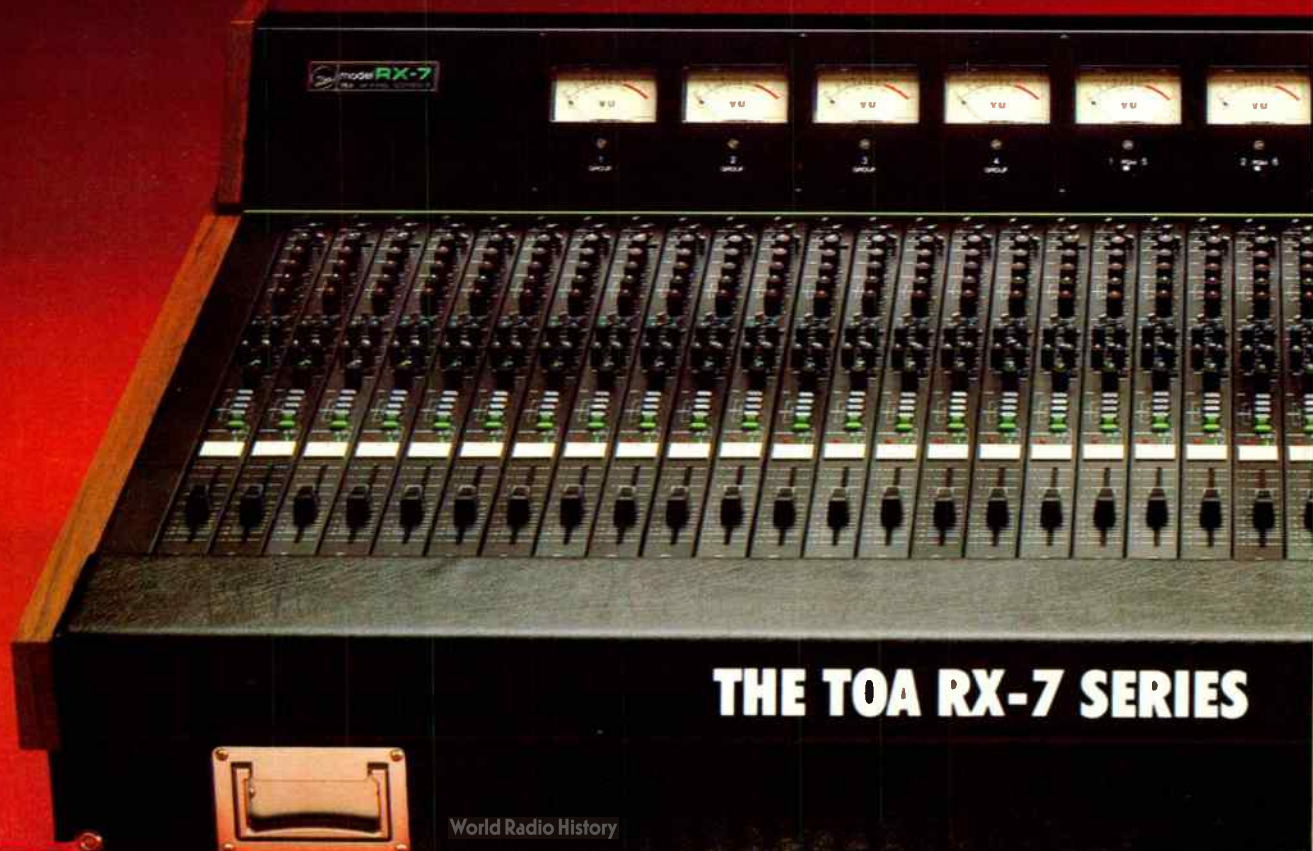
In fact, I doubt I've ever heard—or seen—music made to seem more physical, even somehow violently, inexplicably sexual. Big, hard, fleet shards of bass guitar cut across the contending structure set up by the impetuous guitar lines and eruptive drum patterns, and in that vibrant webwork, surprising references—everything from Chuck Berry to Sly Stone, from Miles Davis to James "Blood" Ulmer—exposed themselves and took on new identities, and, in the process, new histories.

The Minutemen are at once both the thinking listener's and thinking musician's hardcore band—which is to say they write and perform art-informed music from a singular and committed political point-of-view, and they play from a funk-derived punk perspective. They made me feel I had finally seen Moby Dick onstage, and had finally understood why Ahab lost. Some things are too big to get over or around, and too irresistible to ignore.

Just as smart and inventive in their own way are the Descendants, a South Bay group who, at fleeting moments, could pass as the most acidic (certainly the funniest) punk band this city has ever produced. Their far-famed (among critics, that is) 1981 recording, *Flat EP*, was an attempt to make L.A. hardcore swallow a bit of its own calculated stupidity and unyielding smugness, and to make it own up to braver humor and better ideas. "Der Wienerschnitzel," in particular, is perhaps the single best send-up of punk manners confronting a complacent "outside" society I've ever heard—but if you want to know how it goes, you better hear it for yourself; it lasts under thirty seconds, and it's so hostile, profane and funny, a printed transcript wouldn't do it justice.

But like the Minutemen, the Descendants are nearly a remade band onstage. Indeed, they're just as physically deceiving: they look like runty older adolescents (they are runty older adolescents), but when they break into one of their typical blurry-fast punk assaults, they seem suddenly and unignominously muscular. They play punk for the fun and assertiveness of it, but also for the opportunity of musical revelation. Those melodies might go by faster than a hundred yard dash, but they are surprisingly mellifluous and well-fashioned, and they disclose a band fixated with the compactness of an

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extensive sound.

The group's current album, *Milo Goes To College*, also has some good, funny, musically eye-opening moments, though as the title announces, the group recently lost its lead singer, Milo Aukerman, to the fateful allure of higher education (talk about punk contradictions).

More interesting music has been emerging of late from what might be loosely termed Los Angeles' "post-punk" movement. Post-punk has confused a lot of pop observers who don't know whether to regard it as just another stylistic offshoot of punk or as virtually any new-wave related music that came after 1979. In its original usage, post-punk was a description of an evolving attitude in British (and, to some extent, New York) art and pop circles: an attitude that sought to reinvent—subvert, if necessary—the familiar themes and forms of rock 'n' roll (including punk rock) and also reinvent how artists might communicate those facts to their audiences. In England and New York, it was pretty much the art crowd that helped forge post-punk's way, fueled by a revived interest in that exhausted but oddly appealing early 20th century movement, Dadaism. In L.A., a city with an incurable fixation on surface appearances, post-punk hasn't seemed to derive from art-consciousness so much as it seems a *sign* of art, a gesture of

style that means more than its own designs.

A notable exception to that rule is the music of Bpeople, an experimentalist group that has made some of the liveliest and most inventive music in L.A. in recent years, and whose fine, long overdue eponymous LP was just released at the end of last year on Faulty Records. Unfortunately, divided by frustrations and differences, the Bpeople recently called it quits—though in local yore they are fondly remembered for the night they played on the same bill with New Order and one-upped the Manchester group at their own mordant, minor-key post-punk sound.

"We were always a more interesting than sensational band," says Alex Gibson, the group's soft-spoken but headstrong former leader (who bears an envious resemblance to actor Mel Gibson). "As we went along, I took charge more, put my ideas and style into the music more, and I think some people found that a little calculated. I guess that fed into our image as an art band, but I never understood that classification. I always thought of art music as quirky Talking Heads kind of stuff, or Philip Glass. Our music didn't sound like any of that."

Gibson has recently finished a new LP's worth of the same style of dark-tempered, rhapsodic pop that made

Bpeople's score compelling in the first place, and is also composing the score for a new film by Penelope Spheeris (director of the L.A. punkumentary *The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization*). "The music I'm making now is more of that 'planned' style of music that Bpeople made in their later stages," he says, "though actually a lot of the writing and recording is first-take, improvised stuff. And yeah, it's mostly minor-key writing. There's something about major keys that reminds me of cartoons and happy, plastic smiles. I don't know what it is, I just don't like it. Writing for Penelope's film, though, has been something of a departure. It forces me to regress a bit into the punk mode, get a little rawer."

If post-punk is going to serve as a truly effective transitional passage in L.A. music, it needs to have some popular as well as merely semi- or anti-popular applications. The most important Los Angeles area (semi-?, anti-?) pop band at the moment is the aforementioned Dream Syndicate—a still-young, raw-toned quartet that has made two records of self-styled, primitivist informed post-punk: the four-song *Dream Syndicate* EP on Down There Records and the album *The Days Of Wine And Roses* on Slash Records' Ruby subsidiary. Or maybe this is *pre-punk*, since the group clearly draws on early Velvet Underground as a source.

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Originally formed in late 1981 by Steve Wynn, guitarist Karl Precoda and bassist Kendra Smith (obviously the Maureen Tucker figure) as—believe it or not—a Rolling Stones *Hot Rocks* cover band, the Dream Syndicate is a fine, earthy, vigorous, committed homage band. They allude not only to Lou Reed in songs like the frantic gallop of "Sure Thing" on the EP and the album's "When You Smile" with its "Heroin" overtones, but also to Bob Dylan, the Hawks, John Fogarty and *Crazy Horse* Neil Young, both in thrust and in choice of cover versions ("Born On The Bayou," "All Along The Watchtower," Clapton's "Let It Rain," to name a few). The group is also envisioned by some people as the spearhead of some imagined local psychedelic revival, perhaps because they favor impulsive, extended guitar-driven forays.

In truth, the Dream Syndicate might be L.A.'s vengeful, tooth-bared equivalent of San Francisco's Romeo Void: a band that attempts to work its way beyond a paralyzing brand of emotional *ennui* with hard-bitten intelligence. In between the tensely constructed web-work of drone-like guitar sounds constructed by Karl Precoda and Steve Wynn and the bullet-sharp commentary of drummer Dennis Duck (formerly of L.A.'s seminal post-punk band Human Hands), the Dream Syndicate attempts

to turn difficult truths into public entertainment—to sing hard-humored songs that gain shape and force from a sense of exigency, even panic.

But can music this personalized and acrid truly connect with a broad audience? On one level, certainly it can: this is reckless and moving rock 'n' roll that imparts far more impact onstage than on record, and that fact alone should be enough to pull an audience together around this band, if only because of the effect of their physical immediacy.

And yet even the most diehard fan (and I am one) must wonder at times whether the Dream Syndicate wants such a broad and active audience. Whenever I have seen them, Wynn has provoked his audience—goading them with his acerbic wit or baiting them with dissonance. In those moments, Wynn assumes the stance of somebody who means to upset the staid certainty of the audience/performer relationship; he means to goad a crowd not in the tired shock manner of the punks, but in a manner meant to bring the audience closer to the emotions that shaped his music in the first place.

"I've stopped doing that a lot," Wynn says. "It's real safe to go up there and act snide, but I realized that it just means being condescending about putting my emotions forward. And we do get emo-

tional playing our songs, but I don't want those emotions to be seen as just a snotty, bad joke."

Yet mere fun is another side of truth, especially in Los Angeles. As Greil Marcus noted in *Mystery Train*, this is a city where Nathaniel West's and Raymond Chandler's dark versions of urban realism are no more reflective of deep truths than Brian Wilson's fun-in-the-sun view of the city's ethical climate. Pop as a medium of fun, and fun as a purpose of pop, is still an inevitable and necessary tradition in this scene.

The best band working the pop side of post-punk in L.A. at the moment—and the band with perhaps the best shot at commercial recognition—is the Bangles (formerly the Bangs). An all-girl quartet, they draw musical inspiration from such seminal pre-psychedelic influences as the Seeds, Leaves and Yardbirds (see your tattered copies of *Nuggets* and *Pebbles* for further references), and have derived their rough-hewn but fluid harmonic style from such models as the Beatles and the Mamas & the Papas. A wonderful EP released late last year on Faulty, simply entitled *Bangles* and featuring derivative yet undeniably exuberant originals like the driving "Want You" and the buoyant "Mary Street," has already led to a lucrative CBS contract for sisters Vicki and Debbi Paterson

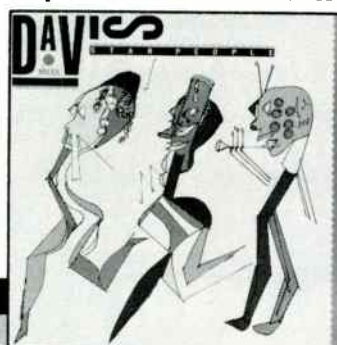


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(lead guitar and drums, respectively), bassist Annette Zilinskas and rhythm guitarist Susanna Hoffs.

It was only a little more than a year ago that Vicki, Debbi and Susanna nervously ventured into a small 8-track studio in Venice to cut their independent debut single "Getting Out Of Hand," a shy but winning fusion of Turtles-style jump and high Hollies harmonies. Says Susanna, a perky beauty with jet-black hair, "I don't want people to have too many expectations of us. As long as they realize that we're just beginning, and that we're not completely satisfied with what we're doing—which means we'll probably keep changing—then we'll feel comfortable with our success.

"I mean, we *do* feel stimulated by all

the attention that we've gotten, but we don't feel overly pressured to make it right now. We want the world to hear us—we wouldn't be a band if we didn't feel completely in love with performing and writing—but we don't want to go on a non-stop tour playing the same songs that we've been doing for the last six months. That can be unhealthy. We've still got a long way to go.

"The other thing," Hoffs continues, "is that like a lot of the other newer bands around town, we're interested in the idea of making it while still remaining fans. I don't think there's any reason for new bands to hide their infatuation with older bands. When you're six years old and get your first copy of *Meet The Beatles*, part of the attraction is simply that you

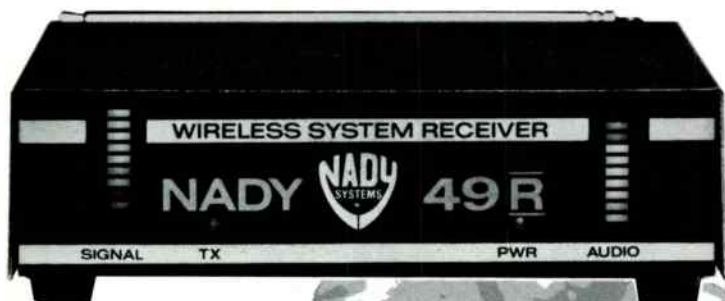
identify with their music, but the other part is that you're madly in love with their images. There's something about being a fan that keeps you strong in your music. You admire those people, but there's a part of you that thinks you're capable of doing it too."

Besides the Bangles, some of the better new L.A. garage-pop-punk bands include Three O'Clock and Red Kross. Three O'Clock (formerly the Salvation Army, until the real organization of the same name caught wind and expressed their amusement) is simply the finest, most tuneful and unsparingly accurate psychedelic homage band that modern pop has produced, and they help remind us how vigorously inventive that music was. And Red Kross, who make good, sloppy rave-up music in the manner of the New York Dolls, are a somewhat maddening outfit that simply haven't committed enough discipline to recording, yet can prove matchless fun onstage.

Susanna Hoffs, more a friendly fan than a rival of any of these bands, has a theory about why so many of L.A.'s current groups (including new bands the Rain Parade, Leaving Trains and the Long Ryders) hearken back to a 60s sensibility: "It isn't that we're trying to re-create the psychedelic sound or recapture the spirit of Sunset Strip. It's simply that growing up here is different than growing up in an urban setting like New York or London. We were a generation that was always being driven around—driven to school or the movies or a dance by our moms, with the radio playing all the time, filling us with this constant background of bands like the Byrds and Love. We're the car radio generation, finally making our own music, and it's only natural it sounds like something you may have heard before."

Steve Wynn has a theory too: "This is a fantastic city to live in, but there are no running traditions to wrap yourself up in here—no history of a Mod or rockabilly scene. For some people, that means they have no identity other than the ones they borrow from other movements. It's easier for them to go out and study the rockabilly style, because they figure there's nothing here anyway. But for some of the rest of us, that vacuum gives us a chance to create our own tradition. It isn't that any of these new bands share a sound, it's just that we share an excitement over the opportunity to make our own new scene."

Bands like the Bangles and Dream Syndicate might prove isolated touchstones in L.A.'s ongoing crucial transitional phase, but they also might prove harbingers of the next wave. For what is truly going on here these days is that rock 'n' roll, punk rock and post-punk are all moving beyond simple delineated notions and styles of pop formalism. Which means, simply, anything goes now. ☐



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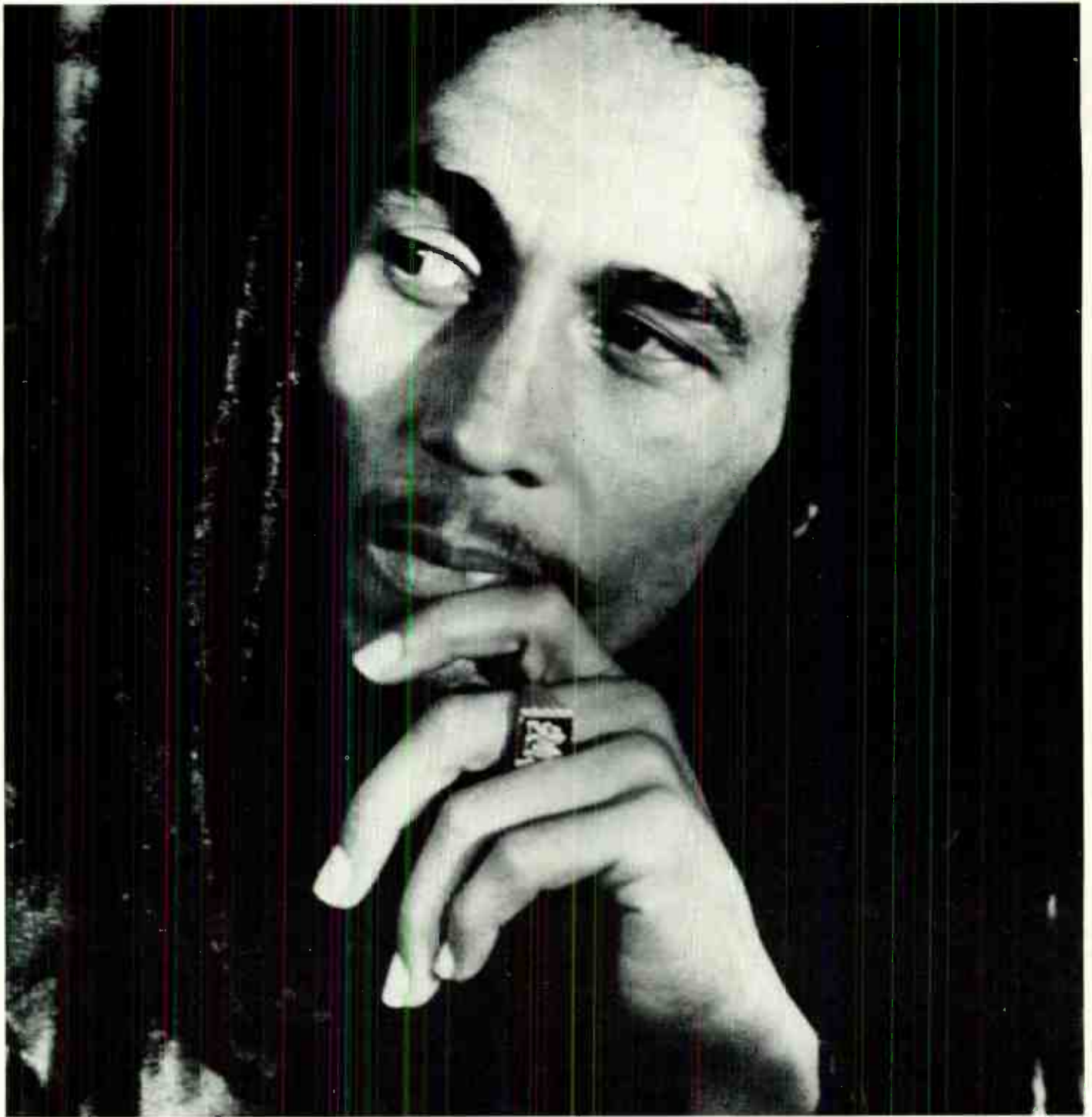


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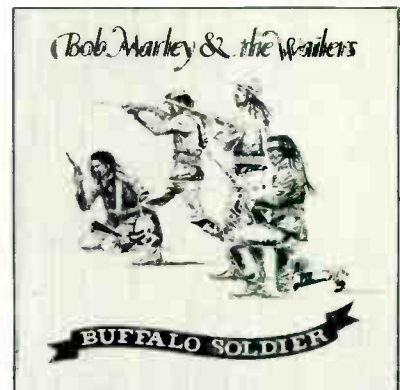
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**JX-3P/PG-200** The revolutionary new JX-3P has six voices, twelve Digitally Controlled Oscillators, 64 program memories, Chorus, a built-in polyphonic sequencer, and M.D. interface (a new system of interface developed for computer-controlled instruments), for the very low price of \$1395.

A companion to the JX-3P is the PG-200 Programmer. The JX-3P Synthesizer can accept and store programs of the PG-200. This allows you to buy a JX-3P and then rent time on the PG-200, or buy it later. The PG-200 will also be interfaceable with other products Roland will introduce this year. The PG-200 retails for \$295.

**SYSTEM-100M** Write your own rules with the 100M Modular Synthesizer System. The modular nature of the 100M lets you build your sound one block at a time to choose exactly the system that most suits your needs, and then add to it at any time. You can also buy individual blocks from the 100M System to expand your current synthesizer set-up.

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**MC-4/MTR-100** The Roland MicroComposer has, without question, written the industry rules for music programming and computer control of a musical performance. Roland has refined this process into an artifact on the latest generation MicroComposer—the MC-4. Describing the numerous features on the MC-4 must include mention of the 15K of internal ROM music programming software, which makes programming fluid and editing flawless.

The MC-4 features 4 channels of sequential control with 2-CVs, 1-Gate and 1-Multiplex output for each channel. Connecting easily to modular synths (like the System 100-M) the MC-4 can also connect to many other synthesizers like the JP-8 and Juno 60 by means of the CV Interface Unit (OP-8). The MTR-100 Digital Cassette Recorder is used for digital storage and retrieval of program data. MC-4 with 48K RAM memory retails for \$3295.

**JUPITER-8** The current heavyweight champion of the keyboard industry, the Jupiter-8 is responsible for introducing features like Split, Dual, and Whole Keyboard Modes, Oscillator Assign Modes and Arpeggiator. The 8-voice 15 Oscillator JP-8 has 64 program memories, 8 patch presets and cassette interface for patch program storage. The powerful sound and sleek design of the JP-8 have also dictated synthesizer design for the 80's and into the future. A brand new feature of the Jupiter-8 is its new low price of \$4995.

**JUNO-6/JUNO-60** In Greek mythology, Juno was Jupiter's mate. In every sense the same is true in keyboards, as the JUNO perfectly complements the Jupiter in sound, features and price. The fat-sounding DCO (Digitally Controlled Oscillator) first introduced on the JUNO-6 has become accepted as a "must" by many keyboard players.

Internal architecture of the JUNOs make it next to impossible to get a bad sound out of one. The JUNO-60 provides the addition of 56 patch memory to the 6-voice JUNO-6 and also cassette program storage and DCB (Digital Communication Bus) that lets you slave two JUNOs, or interface with the MC-4 through the OP-8 Interface. JUNO-6 is \$1295. JUNO-60 is \$1795.

**JUPITER-6** The Jupiter-6 is a six voice version of Roland's Jupiter-8 featuring a split keyboard and a host of new performance features. The JP-6 can store 32 different patch preset combinations and up to 48 different patch sounds, all easily switched by a remote footswitch.

Other unique features include a four-direction Arpeggio, a Detune key for ensemble effect, Cross Mod, VC01 & 2 Syncing in either direction, Key Follow, 3 kinds of Keyboard split, MIDI digital interface and Tape Save and Load of patches. The Jupiter-6 retails for \$2995.

**MC-202** The MC-202 is a two channel polyphonic sequencer that employs the same advanced music programming system found on Roland's MC-4 and MC-8 Micro Composers, is battery operated for go-anywhere convenience, and even contains a full function synthesizer.

The MC-202 can be programmed live or by step programming off its own keyboard or by connecting another synthesizer keyboard, and it easily syncs to Roland's TR-606 Drumatic and TB-303 Bassline to form a complete computer-controlled ensemble. The real beauty of the MC-202 is that it contains a tap sync function (like the MC-4) that allows it to lay down a sync tone on one tape track, and then sync to that track to lay down a whole orchestra of sounds. Even more remarkable is the amount of performance you get from the MC-202 for \$535.

 Roland

# FACES

## DEF LEPPARD

Heavy metal is everything its critics say it is. If some tonsil-strafting clown with a barnyard crow and a fright wig on his chest isn't demanding that you squeeze his monster lemon until the juice runs down his skinny black leather trouser leg, then his guitar players are all combating jock itch by grinding their axes between their legs or contorting their mugs into portraits of pained inspiration as they fire off old Jimmy Page and Ritchie Blackmore licks light-inches into the future. It is a lyrically bankrupt genre consumed by hot (and usually submissive) babes with Amazonian bods, Conan comic book fantasies and the "hey, bud, let's party" ethic. And it is *always* loud—loud as in a 747 gunning its engines on your front lawn, as in your brains being crushed by the decibels on either side

Cut to the Spectrum arena in Philadelphia where the Leppards are effortlessly blowing headliner Billy Squier off the stage and into the nearby Delaware R.iver. The group's new guitarist Phil Collen steps to the front of the stage for his big solo in the martial steamer "Billy's Got A Gun," when a hand from the audience below suddenly grabs his guitar's vibrato bar—not to break it off, but to shake and bang it for him, to become for that split second a real part of the solo. Earlier, singer Joe Elliot (the picture of timeless rock star cool in his sleeveless British Jack T-shirt) asks the crowd in a wildcat shriek "Philly, are you with us?" They respond with a Nuremberg "Yeah," but for one guy that's not enough. He throws his own sweaty T-shirt at the stage—and smack into Elliot's face. And when the band returns for an encore, Elliot is swamped



Def Leppard

and finally being blown out the back of your head. That's the bad news. The good news is that it can be *fun*, at times physically liberating in its own berserk way. And Def Leppard—a band of five young hot rodders originally hailing from Sheffield, England—is one of those times.

by a stage invasion of ecstatic teenage fillies before kicking into a maniacal version of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Travelin' Band." Hard rock bruisers with a bright cherubic glow, Def Leppard has what it takes to drive little girls wild and make the boys roar for more. But what really separates the Leppards from



Marvin Gaye

the loons is a fiercely tight guitar attack and strong melodic sense that mitigate heavy metal's traditional excesses while sparking the usual FM radio groan with a steely pop sheen. Their current bestseller *Pyromania* improves on the straightshooting boogie thrust of their first two Mercury LPs with sharper songhooks, choruses fortified with anthemic bravado ("Rock! Rock! [Till You Drop]," the stadium cheer special "Rock Of Ages") and a panoramic Robert John Lange production. The result is a kind of post-glitter Mott The Hoople with a little AOR gloss and a heavy metal bang.

Onstage, the sound gets leaner and meaner. Guitarists Collen and Steve Clark team up for fuzz riff meltdowns that recall Thin Lizzy's twin guitar blitz in its mid-70s glory. With the solid pump of bassist Rick Savage pacing him, the band's young drummer Rick Allen goes for the big boom but with the crack rhythmic assurance of AC/DC's Phil Rudd. Yet even a song like the hit single "Photograph," which succeeds on record partly because of its sleek chrome choral effect and wily pop turns, rises to the occasion, buoyed by the lusty confidence in Elliot's voice.

Sure, this is supposed to be the dawning of a new music age. Now more than ever, heavy metal is thought to be the last refuge of talentless goons. Still, in a field admittedly glutted with imitation and mediocrity, Def Leppard display rare style and considerable smarts. And they'll show you a good time—if you let them. —David Fricke

## MARVIN GAYE

Throughout his twenty-five years as a presence in popular music, Marvin Gaye's career has been marked by two constants: his musical versatility and his adversary relationships with live performance. The range of material he handled successfully during the golden years at Motown was unsurpassed by anyone in Berry Gordy's talented crew. From his first hit, the bubbly R&B of "Stubborn Kinda Fella," to the sweet mid-tempo "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)," through the pioneering funk of his "Heard It Through The

Grapevine," right on up to the majestic "You're All I Need To Get By," Gaye worked with almost every Motown producer and writer, in the process managing to avoid the stylistic strait-jacket that later hampered the careers of other notable Motown alumni. Gaye's identity was always his own and *What's Going On* simply affirmed that fact. That landmark recording, packed with jazzy chords, haunting orchestral arrangements, anti-establishment lyrics and Gaye's piercing vocals, was a self-conscious artistic statement that both summed up the past and pointed to the future. Subsequent albums, particularly *Let's Get It On* and *Here, My Dear*, refined and intensified the techniques *What's Going On* introduced.

The other constant in Gaye's career has been his erratic behavior as a concert performer. Never one to hide his feelings, Gaye, by his own admission, gives poor performances when his heart isn't in it. Despite the cajoling of Motown's now defunct charm school and the fury of concert promoters, Gaye has been known to do short shows, indifferent shows, and occasionally, no shows. The "on with the show" philosophy of his business is abhorrent to him, so what he feels on any given night is what you get. That's why the concert I saw at the Circle Star Theater outside San Francisco (and apparently others on his 1983 tour—a nearly three-hour show in San Diego is already legendary) was so extraordinary.

Coming off the biggest album of his career, *Midnight Love* on supportive Columbia Records, with the IRS off his back, and resettled in the U.S. after four years of self-imposed exile in Hawaii and Europe, Gaye is in high spirits. At forty-four, his voice is a marvel of control and passion, moving from falsetto on "Til Tomorrow" to the grit of "Grapevine" and the smooth midrange of "Let's Get It On" with easy authority. Backed by a twenty-four piece orchestra, including three synthesizers, three percussionists, and seven horns, Gaye and musical director McKinley Jackson radically rearranged much of his vintage material. "Distant Lover," "Precious Love" and "Get To This," already slow to mid-tempo songs, seemed to be almost in waltz

DARRYL PITT/RETNA



time, allowing Gaye to milk every nuance from their romantic lyrics. To sum up: it was a great performance, one of the best I've ever seen. In case you weren't sure, let me tell you: Marvin Gaye is back.—Nelson George

## THE DIVINYLS

Christina Amphlett looks like Lily Tomlin's Edith Ann doing Patti Smith. She's standing at the microphone at Baltimore's Painters Mill Star Theater, wearing an amazingly ugly purple-and-brown plaid dress with a dirty white Peter Pan collar, exactly the sort of thing most girls throw away upon reaching puberty. It's the kind of dress nobody could look adult in, but Amphlett makes things worse by keeping her mike stand set so high that she almost has to stand on tip-toe to sing. But there's nothing childish about "I'll Make You Happy," the Divinyls' powerhouse opener. As the guitars roar and the drummer slips into overtime, Amphlett first challenges, "I give you kisses, just like wire/Do her kisses taste like mine?," then almost threatens, "I'll make you happy, just like your mommy said!" Between the music's raw energy, the lyric's near desperation and Amphlett's apparent arrested childhood, it's hard to know what to make of it—is this a love song, or what?

Hard on a rational level, maybe, but certainly not as far as the music's physical impact went. The Divinyls stage sound is tough and muscular, unfashionably heavy but never cumbersome. Drummer Richard Harvey and bassist Richard Grossman generate a fairly basic, heads-down rock 'n' roll pulse, but temper its contours to meet the needs of the song; conse-

quently, each tune develops a wicked intensity as it rolls toward its climax. But if Harvey and Grossman are responsible for the initial thrust, it's the guitarwork of Bjarne Ohlin and Mark McEntee that accounts for the ultimate velocity. Neither offers anything elaborate—in fact, McEntee plays with the same stripped-down vigor and head-wagging stance as AC/DC's Angus Young—yet the utter appropriateness of their rhythm work gives the band's sound considerable substance.

In many ways, the Divinyls have perhaps the sharpest song-sense of any band in the so-called Australian invasion. As writers, Amphlett and McEntee know how to set up memorable melodies and solid hooks, but it's the band's ability to make the most of the material that turns good songs into great rock 'n' roll. Not only do the Divinyls shift gears smoothly, keeping their momentum while building excitement, but they have a superb sense for turning shifts in dynamics into musical adrenaline. The most exhilarating example of this talent came during their Baltimore show when a blistering fast rocker melted into the moody introduction to "Elsie," which then built into a great, noisy crescendo before making a graceful fade-out. It was sheer brawn, but it took a fair amount of brains.

Or maybe it was just the sort of pub smarts indigenous to the Australian scene. As bassist Grossman explained before the show, "It's sort of a survival thing—if you don't make the audience dance around, you die a horrible death." To be sure, the Divinyls didn't go half-way about anything; during "Siren," in which Amphlett swaps verses with Ohlin, she bided her time during Oh-

### The Divinyls



lin's verse by pouring a bucket of water over her head, then sang her parts wearing the bucket as an oversized chapeau. And when the band got to the end of its set, Amphlett's and McEntee's sparring ended with McEntee furiously hurling his Les Paul to the stage, then trying to kick the strings off it.

Intense? Yes. Great rock 'n' roll?

Undoubtedly. But there was still something essentially contradictory in the Divinyls' obviously intelligent music and their almost inarticulate stage presence. The Divinyls were quite moving, yet they were equally unsettling in their intensity. This is a band that looks like it will take some getting used to; personally, though, I can't wait.—J.D. Considine

### Return To Forever



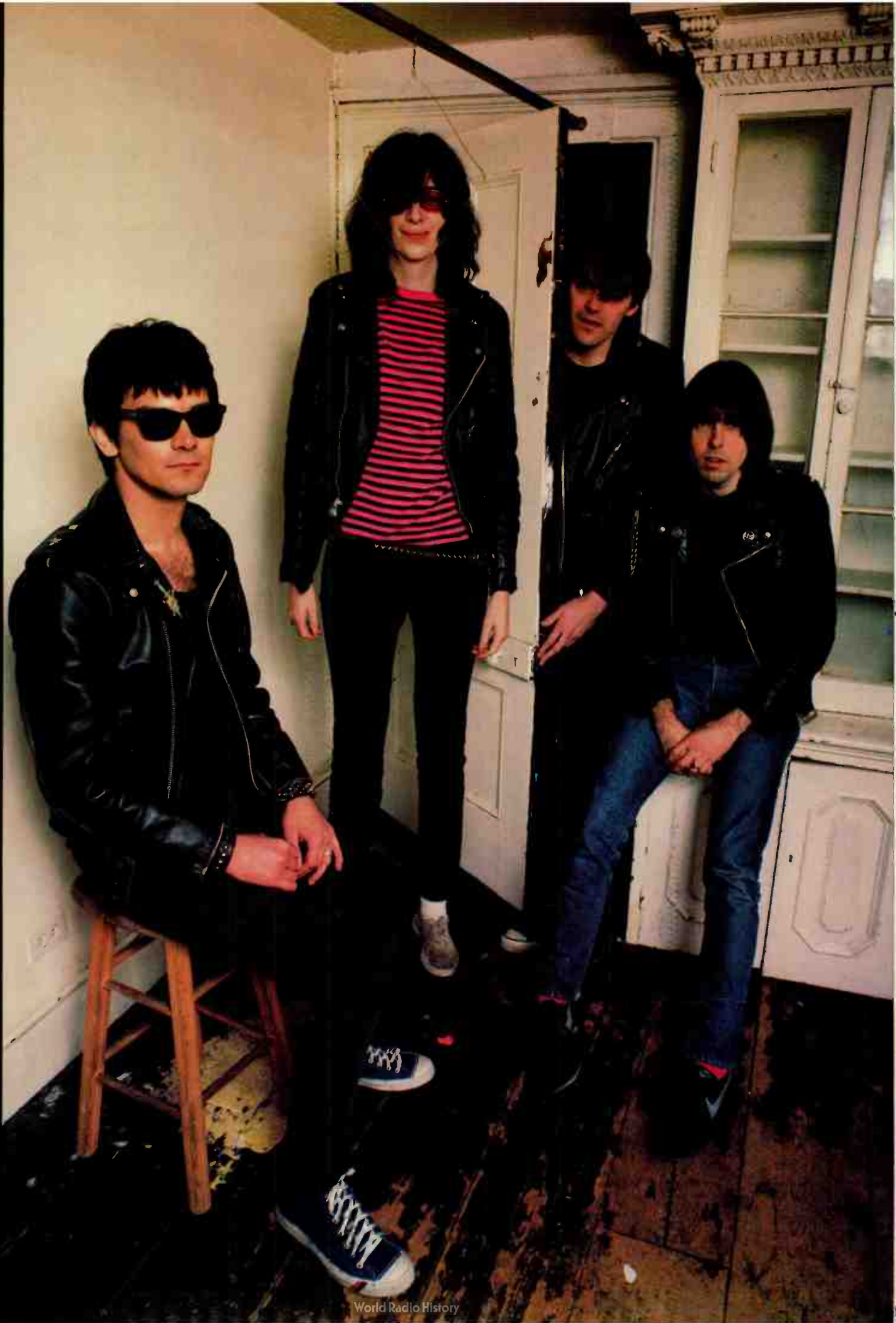
## RETURN TO FOREVER

During their heyday, Return To Forever represented everything gauche and everything hopeful about fusion. In their first incarnation they were a band limited by technology and the Pavlovian enthusiasm of their audience, even if their collective quotient of musical chops knew no bounds. Ultimately though, music is not about technique but feeling, a fact that at times eluded our four heroes, Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, Al DiMeola and Lenny White. Having been in attendance at one of RTF's first New York gigs (at the old Bitter End when the band included Bill Connors, Mingo Lewis and Steve Gadd), I was unable to wipe away the memory of their music or the high collective standard they set. With no more gadgetry than a Fender/Rhodes Electric Piano, a Gibson EB-2 electric bass guitar (and an upright), a small Gretsch-Zildjian kit and a Les Paul Custom/Marshall combo, RTF blew minds with a polyrhythmic cannonade of conversational melody that was funkier, more swinging (in the trad 4/4 sense) and more centered than either Weather Report or the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

But RTF subsequently crossed over to an art-rock/Dead-reak kind of audience, one for whom form was more important than content; and the band found that by simply going out and playing those lofty ostentatious unison melodies, bombastic arrangements and torreador flourishes, their fans would genuflect wildly. Yet even if their approach (well, their volume level anyway) was influenced by the rabid, brew-breathed frenzy of their fans, RTF managed to both patronize and

transcend these expectations. Sure, the obligatory four-way, round-robin exchanges were in place, and the flashy ensemble passages as well, but their new compositions were far more angular and vinegary than the half-baked classicism of old; the soloing more asymmetrical; the harmonies more suspended and airborne. More importantly, the pronounced tension between Clarke and White's rhythmic cycles, and Corea and DiMeola's colorful melodic fanfares made for exciting contrapuntal tag team play.

The new RTF's style involves a return to the rhythmic excitement of old, where kernels of melody and meter are constantly convoluted and extended. So while Stanley Clarke (easily the most rock 'n' roll of anyone in the group) holds down the funk with sly understated detachment, White and Corea somersault away overhead with art acrobatic abandon. Chick Corea's writing and improvising strike a far better balance between his innovative jazz conception (à la the Miroslav Vitous/Roy Hines vintage) and electronic hotcha; and his use of Yamaha's GS-1 and CE-20 digital synthesizers make for warm, tinnitulous keyboard sounds. Even the much-vilified Al DiMeola—who came to symbolize much of fusion's wretched excess—glows in the reflected light of Corea's writing, and if he does often opt for flamencan flash, his speed-of-light inventions give hints of new melodic concerns. This is a band with a future, not just a past, and it would be a crime to abandon ship just at the point when Return To Forever's concept has begun to supercede the adulation of their fanatical followers.—Chip Stern



*And maybe if we all get drunk enough we'll  
all have blackouts so trackless and remark-  
ably sustained that we'll never remember all  
the reprehensible things we said and did to  
each other, hence no guilt. —Lester Bangs*

“A cop pulled us over the other night after a show in New Jersey,” says Dee Dee Ramone, a front-seat silhouette outlined by passing headlights as the Ramones’ van rumbles up the highway to a winter’s night gig in Poughkeepsie. “Really patted us down, searched us twice. He seemed very upset when he had to let us go.”

“He put a flashlight down my pants,” says Johnny Ramone, barely a shadow in the second seat. “It isn’t fair. We did a benefit at CBGB’s for their bullet-proof vest fund.”

“You can’t do favors for anybody anymore,” Dee Dee shakes his head. “We couldn’t even get him to like us.”

“Customs officers have the same attitude,” says Joey Ramone, a voice from the darkness in the third seat.

“Where was the country that they held us up for so long?” asks Johnny. “France...and

**BY CHARLES M. YOUNG**

**After All  
your father  
and I  
have done  
for you...**

*The Ramones Nine Years Later*

*"Punks should have no politics or be right wing; otherwise they're just hippies. Punks should stand on the corner and do nothing."*

Hawaii. They don't like Americans there."

"They're really tough in Australia and New Zealand," says Dee Dee. "They sprayed the plane before they let us off."

They sprayed for Ramones?

"No, they sprayed for bugs," says Dee Dee. "They show you pictures of bugs in the airport to make sure you haven't brought any in your luggage. You can't blame them. In Singapore, there were bugs on the ice-cream."

"Like giant waterbugs," says Johnny. "I wonder why they didn't freeze."

"In Germany," Dee Dee recalls, "I was pissing in the shower and a giant spider came out of the drain."

"I didn't know they had spiders in Germany," says Johnny.

"I think the hotel was condemned," says Dee Dee. "There were moths in every room."

"In Washington, a yellow-jacket flew into my face in the middle of a song," says Joey. "I didn't know whether to run away or keep singing, ya know?"

The Ramones have not run away for nine years now—persevering through nasty policemen, the giant ice-cream bugs of Singapore, worshipful critics, hateful critics, incessant touring, the rise of punk, synthesizers, hardcore, uncountable fads blowing hysterically out of London at six-week intervals and seven studio albums with forty to fifty songs that make all people who got their minds right sing along and/or laugh—and what do the Ramones have to show for it? An s in their spines that has to be the squattest in rock 'n' roll. Johnny and Dee Dee, creators of the speed-uber-alles punk guitar style, have pounded their vertebrae with 64,593,884,226,518 downstrokes in those nine years (according to the Yamaha SSR Digits-Downstroke Readout Counter they keep on their soundboard) and have been warned by chiropractors that in one more tour their heads will be growing directly out of their coccyges. Being a singer, Joey doesn't downstroke anything but he has no muscles anywhere in his 6'3" body, so his skeleton is sort of collapsing under its own weight, there being insufficient support from his nerves, three or four internal organs and (judging from his translucent pallor) white-only corpuscles.

Hang some torn blue jeans and black leather jackets on those frames and the Ramones—all in their early thirties—still look like they need to get slapped around and made to play basketball with the rest of the boys for their own good, which is just what they looked like in 1974, except for their spines being the aforementioned 64,593,884,226,518 downstrokes straighter.

Their show has evolved some, however, due to concessions to mass taste. They play a theme song ("The Good, The Bad And The Ugly") when they come onstage; they have a smoke machine; they choreograph some of the leaping around and Dee Dee no longer gets drunk and falls on his bass. And even if he did fall on his bass for old times' sake, they wouldn't have to stop the show early because they now have replacement guitars.

Serious though these concessions to mass taste have

been, mass taste hasn't conceded much to the Ramones, who are the Grateful Dead of punk: they have exactly 100,000 dotting fans who buy their records and go to their shows, while the rest of mass taste has not, to date, cared. Which is as far as that analogy goes—the Dead being the progenitor hippie band with long guitar solos and mystical lyrics, the Ramones being the progenitor punk band with no guitar solos and lyrics of absolutely no cosmic import. Here in Poughkeepsie, six-hundred of those 100,000 fans have packed Chance's, a nifty old vaudeville theater, and want to know: Can the Ramones still burn after all those downstrokes and a new album, *Subterranean Jungle*? Yes! Well, three of them can, anyway. Drummers Tommy Ramone and Marky Ramone have departed for Ramone limbo and new drummer Richie Beau (he's good but you haven't heard of his previous bands) is not properly speaking a Ramone, which is cause for some cognitive dissonance. That nitpicked, let us proceed to "Teenage Lobotomy," "Blitzkrieg Bop," "I Wanna Be Sedated," "Rockaway Beach," "Cretin Hop," "Today Your Love, Tomorrow The World," "Rock 'N' Roll High School," and twenty-three other amphetaminized tunes only slightly adulterated by pacing and not at all adulterated by a wrong note or untight downstroke. Ecstatic with this delicate balance of chaos and professionalism, Poughkeepsie thrashes through all of it, proving that the Ramones remain hotter than snot on a skillet; proving that, with allowance for cognitive dissonance, the Ramones remain the same band Lester Bangs thought the best in America; proving that Lester Bangs remains the most perspicacious rock critic around, even if he isn't anymore.

"I don't like apartments being described," says Johnny Ramone in his apartment. "It's like you're reading a biography of some guy and suddenly you're finding out about his apartment. Ya know, 'What is this crap?'"

Conceding some literary license, Johnny does give permission to describe his cat, which is blind because of great white clouds of glaucoma in its eyeballs (spends a lot of time clawing the air) and has no name.

"Animals don't have names in nature," Johnny points out, "so why should I give it one?"

Johnny playing his 64,593,884,226,518th downstroke.



EBET ROBERTS

Politically and personally and professionally, Johnny likes trains that run on time.

"I don't understand how anyone in a punk band could be a liberal," says Johnny, distressed at a tendency among certain hardcore bands to denounce American foreign policy. "Punks should have no politics or be right wing; otherwise, they're just hippies dressed as punks. Joan Baez already complained about all those issues, so why should we? Punks should stand on the street corner and do nothing, like Marlon Brando in 'The Wild One.' There's one thing I'm against that hippies are against: I don't like killing animals. But that has nothing to do with being a hippie."

Johnny enjoyed the discipline of military school a couple of years before entering public high school in Forest Hills, Queens, then worked construction for four years. "Those guys just hated hippies all day long," he recalls fondly.

Would he send his own kid to military school?

"I'm not going to have any kids. I don't like them. I want no responsibilities other than myself. My job is better than most but I still resent it. If you can live your own life and do exactly what you like—that's what everyone wants, right?"

What doesn't he like about his job?

"The only thing to make me suffer is the outside pressure to have a hit. It's a constant struggle not to compromise. I don't want to listen to things, don't want ideas from elsewhere, don't want to be influenced by trends."

What was his relationship to Lester Bangs?

"I liked him, but he got a little sloppy when he got drunk. I never thought I should get close to someone who reviews records. What if he doesn't like your album? Should he pass over it so you can stay friends? I asked him that and he didn't know the answer."

Did it surprise Johnny when Lester died?

"I'm not surprised when anyone dies. It can happen any day to any person. My father died, and three close friends died—two of an overdose, one in a car accident."

What would happen if Johnny died?

"I'd go to hell. I've been a very rotten person all my life. I got all those bad sins on me."

"John and I used to sit on rooftops and sniff glue and drop television sets on people," Dee Dee reminisces in Paul's Lounge, an East Village restaurant/bar. "Actually, John used to drop the television sets. I only threw firecrackers. We didn't receive proper guidance from our parents."

Johnny and Dee Dee continued as chums after high school, meeting on their lunch hours to ogle guitars on 48th Street, wondering how they could start a band when they were broke. Then Dee Dee saw the New York Dolls at the Mercer Arts Center.

"I couldn't believe you could just be in a band and be so rebellious without spending \$10,000 on amplifiers. I learned you could be what you wanted to be, and after the Dolls, I wouldn't settle for anything less. That's something you didn't get after seeing Jeff Beck."

So they bought the two cheapest guitars at Manny's Guitar Center: a fifty-dollar Mosrite for Johnny (still his trademark) and a fifty-dollar Danelectro bass for Dee Dee. Dee Dee smashed that one, stepped on a subsequent Gibson Firebird, then bought his first Fender Precision (now his one of choice because it takes the most abuse) from Fred Smith of Television. "He told me never to sell it," says Dee Dee, "but I did."

Dee Dee was not the most responsible guy at the time. After his father (a chief warrant officer in the Army) divorced his mother when Dee Dee was fifteen, he gave himself a rather permissive upbringing on the streets and ended up addicted to heroin for thirteen years.

"I had my last rites three times before I figured out maybe I should straighten up. It gets pretty expensive: seventeen-, eighteen-hundred dollar bills for emergency room stuff. Two years and a month I've been off everything now. I used to think I had to live the life of a punk rocker to be authentic, but I



JOHN FRIEDLANDER/RETNA

The revitalized Dee Dee meditating on the Clash.

learned from watching Sid Vicious die. Drugs are dangerous. I don't know why I couldn't see it's more fun without them."

Dee Dee now leads a comparatively staid existence with his wife Vera back in Queens when not on the road. He limits his hang-out time to a couple nights a month, does a hundred situps and pushups every morning, plus twenty minutes on the heavy bag. The excesses of his youth he feels are behind him, but he remains proud of the Ramones' artistic achievement.

"This band has a noble history," says Dee Dee. "There was no rock 'n' roll anymore in the mid-70s. We had to pioneer it all over again. We toured non-stop for years to prove we were real, not just dreamers. When we played the Roundhouse in London for the first time on July 4, 1976, it was just incredible. All the gobs of spit—that's how you could tell if they liked you. Everyone in England came to the party afterwards: the Sex Pistols, the Damned, Marc Bolan, the Heartbreakers. The first time I met Paul Simonon and Mick Jones, I knew they would be rock stars. The Clash just knocked me out, they had so much charisma."

"England just had pub rock back then. Somehow after we went over there, the feeling expanded. All these bands were coming out of nowhere. Everyone was saying, 'I'm starting a band,' whether they knew how to play or not. It was just this attitude."

Could he define that attitude?

"Hatred. Pure adolescent hatred. Hatred of parents, hatred of society, hatred of music."

Splitting most of the songwriting with Joey, Dee Dee has been highly inspired since kicking junk, filling notebook upon notebook with new material. He does, however, continue his symbiotic relationship with Johnny that is probably unique among major bands.

"I go by the dots and frets, so he has to tell me where to play. I don't know the names of the strings even."

Any opinion on John's politics?

"I'm proud of it. He's a good American. When the cops used to harass us all the time, he thought they were just being good cops. He just doesn't like to see Americans get shit on. I don't think about politics much myself. I am socially conscious,



Joey considering perversions with a vacuum cleaner.

though. I am very aware of love for my fellow man."

At the risk of sounding like a hippie?

"Yeah. I do love my fellow man, no matter who. Even some Russian guy."

"I really missed Lester around Christmas," says Joey over a beer in Paul's Lounge. "Not that I ever spent Christmas with him, but I kept thinking of this time he bugged me for a week to come look at his tree. Finally I did and it was all roped up like it was on the street and it was decorated with boxes of Romilar. It was Lester. When he fucked around, anything went. He liked things spontaneous."

Joey started getting spontaneous when he bought his first snare drum with King Korn Trading Stamps and took lessons from a famous jazz drummer (name forgotten, bad breath remembered). The snare evolved into a double bass with five toms across the top and he abandoned his teacher in favor of eating ups and playing "Happy Jack." Eventually Alice Cooper and Lou Reed replaced Keith Moon in his pantheon of heroes and Joey assumed lead singing duties with a band called Snyder.

"I liked lyrics about violence and sexual perversion," says Joey. "But I wanted to take the antics a step further. I wanted more realism."

Like what realism?

"Humping the bass player's leg like a dog. Fucking a vacuum cleaner."

Public demand limited Snyder to under fifty performances but Joey was soon approached by two fellow Forest Hills High School alumni who were sporting a Mosrite and a Danelectro and were in need of a drummer. Joey was not it. As Johnny and Dee Dee played faster and faster, Joey's wrists kept locking and locking. So they put Tommy Ramone on drums—a friend who had never played and could therefore keep the beat real simple—while Joey sang. Developing a ten-minute set of original songs with no padding from vacuum cleaners, they searched for a venue and approached Hilly Krystal, owner of a Bowery bar called the CBGB that wasn't attracting many customers with Country Blue Grass and Blues.

"Mostly we played for the bartender and his dog," says Joey. And it was just as well, because even though all their songs were 1:58 long and had no more than three chords, they often got lost and stomped offstage arguing. Yet they remained united in their vision of popular music of the day.

"It was all, uh..." Joey stares into his beer for several seconds, searching for the precise word. "...shit."

It turned out a lot of people agreed with that sentiment and

they gradually found a home at the CBGB's: loners and screw-ups from the Bowery, other bands (mostly arty types like Talking Heads and Patti Smith), the Warhol crowd, and journalists who anointed it a scene by the Summer Rock Festival of 1975. The Ramones were the first act awarded a record contract, producing for the unheard of low sum of \$6000 *Ramones*, one of the funniest and most charming records ever made. After much critical debate whether songs like "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue" were smart or dumb, American radio programmers and consumers ignored it for the most part. The English missed the joke entirely (*Homo non intelligendo fit omnia*: "Man becomes all things by not understanding them") and gave the world the Sex Pistols, who created more hysteria than anyone since the Beatles before breaking up as their rage imploded.

"By 1979, all these soft new wave bands who came after us had made it: Elvis Costello, Blondie, Cars, Graham Parker," says Joey. "We stuck by our guns through it all, played our own music. Now it's time for us to happen, and if we don't the hell with everybody."

Does the punk vs. hippie thing mean much anymore?

"Not much. I haven't seen a hippie for a long time. Maybe they're all in California waiting for the next US Festival. To John and Dee Dee, I'm probably a hippie. They're the real Ramones. I don't fit into any mold. To me, rock 'n' roll is the art form most about being yourself."

A force for freedom and...

"If this is freedom, I'm fucked," Joey says, laughing. "If this is freedom, I should be in East Germany getting tortured."

Lester Bangs could have written some good words about why this last statement by Joey Ramone is not nonsense, why freedom can be harder to bear than getting tortured in prison. In 1978, he wrote about the philosophical significance of the Ramones for *Trouser Press* by relating a conversation with Robin Tyner, eight-year-old son of Rob Tyner of the MC5:

*One day in the middle of a couple of ice cream cones, I looked across the table at him and said, "Robin, you know that Ramones song where they say, 'Now I wanna be a good boy/I don't wanna be bad/Now I wanna run away from home'? Why do you think they put those two ideas together?"*

*He held up one finger, cocked his head back and took another meditative slurp. "Let me think about it for a minute... Okay, I think the reason they said that was that he was a good boy, but they were treatin' him bad at home. So, if he wanted to stay good, the only thing he could do was run away."*

Being bad to be good, listening to your own voice instead of conventional morality, acting on that voice despite the terrible danger and guilt of leaving home—Lester loved that theme and therefore loved the Ramones.

Lester also lived that theme. He grew up in a strict Jehovah's Witness household but found it too confining for his muse in rock 'n' roll and typewriter, so he left. He found college too confining, so he left. He found *Rolling Stone* too confining, so he left. He found *Creem* too confining, so he left.

That's when he moved to New York, saw the Ramones one night at Max's in 1976, and sensed something that wasn't too confining. Over the years, as he wrote hundreds of thousands of words for dozens of magazines (he was a member of the smallest minority group on earth: writers who love to write), he almost became a member of Joey's household. He hung out with Joey, saw Joey's psychologist/stepfather as a client, had long talks with Joey's mom while waiting for his sessions, played in a group called Birdland with Joey's brother Mitch Lee.

Probably what Lester found most confining were normal rules of behavior. He would be exhilarated one day and pour fifty pages through his typewriter, then so depressed the next day that he couldn't get out of bed. He took enormous amounts of alcohol and drugs, particularly cough syrup. He left his

apartment door unlocked. His phone was always getting disconnected. He would quote embarrassing conversations with friends that they thought were private, then insist that he had a right to as an artist. And he tended to do things to extremes: One time he saw Joey take a teaspoon of some health food concoction called Hemotonic. Joey said it helped with his energy level, so Lester went out and drank two bottles. The resultant legendary "Hemotonic farts" contributed heavily to break up of Birdland.

He was trying to moderate. After months of curbing his drinking, he got the flu after turning in the manuscript for *Rock Gomorrah* (written with Michael Ochs for Delilah). He took some booze and Darvon—in a combination that perhaps would have little effect when his body was used to it—and died on April 30, 1982. Lester apparently thought he was just taking a nap.

"He's such a vital presence that it's still hard to believe he's not here," says Joey's mom, Charlotte Leshner. "There was a kind of genius about Lester, but he was also a little boy. He had no discipline. When the spirit moved, he just went out and got roaring drunk. I think he let the little boy overrule him."

"Lester was not a rock 'n' roll writer; he was a writer," says Greil Marcus, his first editor at *Rolling Stone* and now compiler of an anthology of his best work. "He was a literary figure in the tradition of Kerouac and the Beats. He could be an intellectual, but he also had a streak of pure Mark Twain. He loved being the unlettered American stomper."

"If I said anything good about the Clash before, I want to take it back," says Dee Dee at the photography session for the surrounding artwork. "They deserve it. They said bad things about us. And they're anti-American. If they hate America so much, how come they're over here all the time? Their country is the most fascist country in the world."

"We also like Duran Duran a lot," says Joey. "Ever notice how they sound just like Toto? Human League, Culture Club, Flock of Seagulls—we love them all."

"We've said so many nasty things," rues Dee Dee. "We won't have any friends left, even in new bands."

"So," asks Johnny, "you wanna be friends with Boy George?"

After four albums (*Ramones*, *Leave Home*, *Rocket To Russia*, *Road To Ruin*) with only minor modifications for more commercial appeal, the Ramones tried two new producers who softened their sound: Phil Spector on *End Of The Century* (they didn't even wear their leather jackets on the cover) and Graham Gouldman on *Pleasant Dreams*.

"They weren't very happy with the results and they were afraid I would do the same thing to them," says Richie Cordell, producer with Glen Kolotkin of *Subterranean Jungle*. "They attacked me as soon as I walked in the studio. I was so upset after fifteen minutes that I tried to leave and walked into a closet. They didn't trust me for over a week, but then they were very open to suggestions. The next album should be even better."

Cordell and Kolotkin were responsible for the terrific guitar sound on Joan Jett's last album and managed the same trick for *Subterranean Jungle*. Fans of the first four Ramones albums will be ecstatic to hear that loud, blaring guitar has finally returned to back up such traditional Ramonian sentiment as: "I'm gonna brag about it/Gonna kill my mom and dad/I won't be sad about it/'Cause they treat me so bad."

"We double the guitar a lot to make it thicker without greater distortion," says Kolotkin. "The trick is not putting the microphones (Electro-Voice RE20's) too close to the speaker. A lot of guys put the mike right in the speaker, giving it no room to breathe."

What did he think of their musicianship?

"A lot of bands can't read music, and it doesn't mean anything. The Ramones are unique as individual personalities and as a group personality. No one could copy what they do."

ROBERTA BAYLEY

***"I had my last rites said three times before I figured out maybe I should straighten up. It gets pretty expensive for emergency room stuff."***

The atmosphere is pure 1976 as hopeful groupies, admiring punks, disoriented hippies and strange unclassifiables crowd the Ramones' dressing room at the Brooklyn Zoo. Handsome Dick Manitoba of the tragically defunct Dictators (funniest of the punk precursors) paces around as the band he now manages, the Del-Lords, exits the stage. The crowd immediately picks up the refrain from "Blitzkrieg Bop": "Hey ho! Let's go!"

"If I said anything bad about the Clash before," says Dee Dee, "I want to take it back. We have enough problems."

Didn't the Clash say bad things about you?

"Yeah," Dee Dee ponders. "They did say bad things about us. Go ahead and use it. I must have been hysterical when I said Mick Jones had charisma. The Clash suck."

Monte Markham, the Ramones' highly professional road manager, clears out the dressing room as the boys play a warm-up song on unamplified guitars and a drum case. Outside, the rumor circulates that someone is selling counterfeit tickets on the street. The place does seem stuffed to the ineffectual ventilators, keeping the air and sweating crowd around the bar thick.

"The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly" whistles out of the loudspeakers, summoning images of that classic American stomper Clint Eastwood and raucous howls from the crowd. The smoke begins to billow. The lights go up.

The Ramones are standing behind a wall of about thirty hard core punks who are perched on the amplifier cases that someone had thought would make a good barrier in front of the stage. Barely visible, the Ramones play most of the show to the thirty punks who thrash, pound their temples to the backbeat and swing from the lighting fixtures. The rest of the crowd appears to be about one-third hardcore punks who got there too late to fit the barriers, one-third regular human beings and one-third seventh-degree blackbelt nerds, guys who

**Joey impressing girls with his collapsing skeleton.**



studied with the great Nerd Masters of the Far East before they were allowed to wear thick glasses, guys who hear the "We accept you!" call in "Pinhead" that Lester Bangs was so fond of.

After "Psychotherapy," Joey finally calls for order. "You gotta get down or we can't go on!" he shouts to the punks flailing each other about four feet away. "SO GET FUCKIN' DOWN!"

"GET FUCKIN' DOWN!" the crowd chants, throwing half-full beer cans and anything else it can get hold of. "GET FUCKIN' DOWN!"

Bowing graciously to public opinion, the punks are pummeled and clawed back into the crowd, at last revealing the Ramones in their full-stage glory: Johnny and Dee Dee grimacing as they downstroke the basic chord structure of the songs at machine gun pace; Richie with a little touch of fear in his grimace as he struggles to keep up and keep his new job; Joey towering over the proceedings. Joey doesn't move much—kinetics being left to the instrumentalists—yet projects one of the oddest stage presences in rock 'n' roll. His face is almost wholly obscured by hair, purple sunglasses and microphone. His limbs are long and spidery thin, giving the impression that something might snap off if he danced. He has utterly, completely, absolutely, beyond the slightest chance of quibble from any sentient being in the entire universe, no ass. (Incidentally, the guy can also sing pretty well, borrows his inflections from all the right sources, hits all the right notes, screams only at appropriate moments and is proud he uses the same monitor settings as Meatloaf.)

The Ramones are louder than most bands onstage—Johnny's Marshalls and Dee Dee's Ampegs turned up to ten at all times for maximum distortion without resorting to fuzztone. The soundman, however, keeps the audience at 114 decibels, at that optimum just-below-the-pain-threshold point that all sensible rock bands try for (the Ramones used to be real unsensible).

Probably the most impressive thing about the show is how sincere they look at all times. The music would not be funny or energetic or uplifting if the Ramones ever gave an indication that they weren't trying. Power chords this loud and this straightforward could easily degenerate into Black Sabbath or worse if their grimaces ever gave a glimpse of boredom through the typhoon of sweat they generate.

Which is kind of too bad, because after almost two hours of watching the supreme effort, the audience is so drained by the heat that they can't cheer, are capable only of emitting random, limp snarls for the two encores. The Ramones, as always, deserve better.

Looking like American Gothic after the meltdown, Dee Dee and his wife Vera sit calmly in the backseat of the van for the ride back to Manhattan after the show.

"We have to get up early tomorrow for the Garden," says Vera.

"Yeah," says Dee Dee. "Magnificent Morocco versus Bob Backlund and Andre the Giant versus Big John Stud. Morocco's my favorite. He's a bad guy, but he's real cool. He wrestles scientifically."

Professional wrestling? Isn't it all rigged?

"The women and midgets are fixed, but the guys really fight. They have to take them out on stretchers. Sometimes they even use foreign objects. Plenty of times I've seen a champion take off his belt and conk the other guy on the head with it. Even before the match starts."

Joey and Johnny sit staring out of the window as "Nights In White Satin" groans out of the radio from the distant past.

"Hey, I saw the Moody Blues at the Fillmore East," Dee Dee exclaims. "I took about twenty Dramamines—ya know, that drug for motion sickness? And I saw bananas everywhere, man. It was a real hallucination." Dee Dee pauses for a frightening second thought: "If you write this, don't make it sound like they're my favorite group, or anything, okay?" ☐

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BY TIMOTHY WHITE

It was just before midnight, and the cheers from the distinguished audience were mingling with the shouts of the ragged crowd climbing over the walls surrounding the Rufaro Stadium in Salisbury, the capital city of Zimbabwe. The wind suddenly shifted, and billows of tear gas being used by police outside the arena to control the throng blew across the grounds to inflame the eyes of the man performing on the small stage in the center of the arena.

The concert that had been in progress for about twenty minutes was part of the official Independence Day ceremonies on April 18, 1980 for the new nation-state of Zimbabwe. The paying customers and

# BOB MARLEY

*Myth, Magic & Terrible Truth*

Excerpts from *Catch A Fire*



*No one heard what Marley had long ago embraced but was only just beginning to feel: for all mortal men, there was no safe place.*

dignitaries (among them Marxist Prime Minister Robert Mugabe and England's Prince Charles) who had assembled to celebrate the casting off of white colonial tyranny were now witnesses to a demonstration of another form of repression: thousands of adulant peasants and rank-and-file members of the revolutionary army had amassed outside the arena hoping to witness the performance of international reggae sovereign Bob Marley, hero of freedom fighters everywhere and the most charismatic emissary of modern Pan-Africanism. Hearing the reggae rhythms pulsing within, wave upon wave of idolators attempted to storm the gates. Police responded with tear gas grenades and rifle reports, but the people would not be held back, and they surged over the walls.

Marley pushed the thick, ropey strands of his dreadlocks away from his swollen eyes, peering into the darkness beyond the blinding stage beacons. There were shouts, screams and the muffled thuds of police batons against bodies as what looked from a distance like a living sea of people was beaten back from the crest of the stadium's parapets. Rallying to rejoice over their deliverance from the yoke of white oppression, much of the black population of the city was now fighting for the simple right to hear reggae.

"Madness," he muttered, as he darted about, eventually stumbling through an opening in the stinging fog. Soldiers brandishing M-16s led him off to the side of the stage and down into a trailer, where he dabbed his eyes with a water-soaked cloth. Forty-five minutes later, order would be restored, and Marley would return to the stage to perform the battle cry he had written the year before about this country's revolutionary struggle.

*To divide and rule  
Could only tear us apart  
In everyman chest  
There beats a heart  
So soon we'll find out  
Who is the real revolutionaries  
And I don't want my people  
To be tricked by mercenaries  
Natty dread it in a Zimbabwe...  
Africans a liberate Zimbabwe....*

But Marley's singing lacked its customary snap and bite. The scene he witnessed earlier had shattered the vision of black African solidarity he had brought with him to Zimbabwe. His spirit had been broken.

Four years earlier, Bob Marley had slammed an open palm on a tabletop in the kitchen of his Kingston, Jamaica home and explained why he and his Rasta brethren wanted to migrate out of Babylon—a land without borders in which men sin and suffer for it—and return to Mother Africa, to Ethiopia. "De higher people in Jamaican government should clean up de dumps an' slums and feed me people, me childran!" Marley had said. "Me read da paper an' am ashamed. Dats why me must leave dis place an' return ta Africa. If Jamaica was me home, den me love Jamaica, an' me wouldn't feel like me feel: dat dis place is *nuh* me home. Me don' want ta fight da police who help start de riots wil' cruelty, but when me move to go ta Africa, if dem say no, den me personally will have ta fight."

Yet, when Marley finally did go to Africa for the first time in December of 1978, he saw the same slums and hungry faces he'd left behind in Jamaica, the same corrupt, strong-arm governments towering over the misery. This Africa was the sole continent where virtually no modern political leaders had ever been peacefully voted out of office. He entered war-torn Ethiopia through Kenya to discover that his beloved Haile Selassie, the man he worshipped as God, had died in disgrace, his remains in some unknown hole in the ground. The absence of any memorial to the man, coupled with the open contempt with which the Ethiopians recalled their former emperor, had left Marley severely shaken.

And now, in Zimbabwe, all his illusions were ebbing away; precious dreams dissolving into odious realities. His tumored, nail-less right toe ached horribly. He had repeatedly told the press that the bandages he wore concealed a soccer injury, but the throbbing pain was a constant reminder of what doctors had been telling him over the past two years: have the toe amputated or make his peace with life; if he wouldn't undergo radical treatment for cancer, he would fly away home to his heavenly reward in Zion a lot sooner than he planned.

"Rasta no abide amputaticin," he had spat back at them. "I and I (me and my brethren) don' allow a man ta be *dismantled*. Jah, de living God, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Ras Tafari, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, 225th ruler of de 3000-year-old Ethiopian Empire, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, Heir to de Throne of Solomon, He will heal me wit' de meditations of me ganja chalice, me 'cutchie' (clay hooka pipe) or He will tek me as a son into His Kingdom. Nuh scalpel shall crease me flesh! Dem cyan't kill Jah, cyan't kill Rasta. Rastamon live out."

Twelve months before, he still might have been able to save himself. If he'd stopped calling doctors "samfai," the Jamaican patois term for a confidence man who cheats the gullible by pretending he has the power of "obeah" (witchcraft). If he'd submitted to chemotherapy or radiation treatment and faced up to the inevitability that his dreadlocked lion's mane would drop from his head in snaky clumps. If he hadn't believed the stoned-out sycophants hovering around him who kept insisting he was the "tallowah" (sturdy, fearless) Tuif Gong, one of the steely fingers of Jah's own mighty hand.

And now the malignant, purposefully unchecked cancer cells had grown rampant, burrowing their way through Marley's spindly body like the ravenous, tree-nesting Jamaican "stink ants" that scurry up into the ackee boughs and devour the ripe fruit from the inside out. He suspected he would have one more year of torment, maybe two at the most, before the end would come. He wondered if he might die in the bosom of white America, while on his upcoming tour there, and considered the ironies inherent in such a scenario.

In his native Jamaica, he was both rock star and folk hero, as famous for his ability to get white American and European audiences to pay rapt attention to his songs of black retribution as he was for inducing Jamaican Creole culture to dance with pride to the heartbeat of its own sorrows and follies. The formation of the Wailers in 1962 had coincided with Jamaica's achievement of independence from British colonialism. Bob Marley and boyhood chums Neville O'Riley Livingston a.k.a. Bunny Wailer and Peter Mackington (now Tosh) filled the shantytowns of Kingston with music that proved to be a formidable musical and cultural force. Their first Jamaican hit, recorded in the pre-reggae ska era, was "Simmer Down," a call for the island's "rude boys" (ghetto hooligans) to "control your temper" and cease the runaway street violence that had gripped the Caribbean nation. But while Bob Marley would go on to become one of the most revered spokesmen in the Third World, he had made the greatest critical and commercial inroads as a recording artist in America and Europe, where young whites reveled in the uniqueness of the ethno-political Caribbean hotbed that had spawned his snarling reggae anthems, and in the inside-out time signatures that kept them pulsating. And from urban centers in Japan to backstreet discos in Rio de Janeiro, millions of others had their own special reasons for being possessed by the Marley magic.

In Africa, he was beloved as a patriot of Pan-Americanism, a charismatic entertainer whose elemental passions were readily embraced on the continent that invented the talking drum. But watching from a Salisbury stage as the crowd battled against itself, he saw that none of them had been listening to the music, to its message. And he sensed that perhaps no one anywhere was paying close enough attention to hear the mounting inner rumblings, the frightened tremors of someone trying to explain a religious concept he'd long ago embraced but only just this moment had begun to feel that for all mortal men, there was no safe place.

In a land where so many people possess so little, personal mystique is a highly valued form of social currency—it can buy the enduring respect of others. A familiar figure about whom precious little can be discovered is a powerful presence indeed. Bob Marley's countrymen esteemed him for his inscrutable nature, for his unfathomable behavior. They marveled at his ability to rise from wretched poverty to become one of the most renowned figures ever to emerge from the Caribbean, and they were held spellbound by the graphic intensity of his brand of storytelling, as in the terrifying scenario of "Burnin' And Lootin'," in which a man awakens to find himself a prisoner in the custody of anonymous uniformed officials, while insurrection rages in the streets.

But perhaps what is most amazing about Marley's rise to fame is how little his fans around the globe needed to know about the thematic undercurrents in his music, the different levels on which his messages were delivered and the roles Rastafarianism and the ethno-cultural Jamaican context played in the whole dynamic. He seemed to embody the magical qualities of Anancy, the impish spider of African folklore which has the ability to alter his physical form at will.

The chief guardians of Jamaica's folk wisdom and lore have been the sorcerers, known as "Obeahmen" (from the Twi *obayi*—meaning magic or sorcery) and *myalmen* (from the African Hausa word *maye*, for wizard). Obeah is the practice of exploiting the power of "duppies," or spirits of the dead, to harm or help

people and influence events. A myalman, however, has the ability to thwart or neutralize evil wrought by duppies.

Throughout the Third World, Bob Marley was viewed as a modern myalman who had the will and the means—literally and/or figuratively—to repel evil. He was, as he himself claimed, a "duppy conquerer." He issued a song by that name in the late 1960s, shortly after being released by the Kingston police following a minor ganja arrest.

The Akan people of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), from whom most black and brown Jamaicans are descended, believed that man has three souls: the *life-soul*, sent directly from the Supreme Being at birth; the *personality-soul*, which determines his destiny; and the *guardian/shadow-soul*, which protects his conscience and remains behind, in the form of a duppy, after his body has gone into the ground and his life-soul has returned to God. There are both benign and malevolent duppies, but all are feared for their unpredictability and because they can be sent on grievous errands by the power of obeah.

It is the mission of the Rastaman to drive out such "odious superstition" and replace it with the Revelation of Jah Rastafari. The Wailers' music used the language, lore and idioms of the humble country folk of Jamaica to explain the goals of Rastafari. The Rastaman, the ultimate black pariah, believes that the bitter passage through time of the forcibly displaced black man—his captivity, his awakening with the aid of the proper religious teachings and his struggle to return to Africa—mirror the spiritual pattern by which all men suffer and strive for Deliverance. This journey replicates the mystic migration of the life-soul to earth and then back to Jah.

A year to the month after he had appeared in Zimbabwe, Bob Marley was awarded Jamaica's Order of Merit, one of its highest honors, in recognition of his contributions to the nation's culture. Weeks later, he was dead from brain, liver and lung cancer. A national hero, he was given the kind of funeral customarily accorded a head of state. The spectacle was impressive, often deeply moving. Indeed, the international

The view of the village of Nine Miles as seen from the young Robert Nesta Marley's window



press coverage clearly showed that millions around the world, from Louisiana to Sierra Leone, from Caracas to Sidney, longed to say goodbye, feeling an overwhelming need to say thank you to the man for his uncommon legacy.

But who was Bob Marley? For most of his public life, he was never interviewed in depth as was, say, a Jomo Kenyatta or an Elton John. Most of the stories published about Marley centered on Rastafarianism and deciphering his patois. Early on, he grew tired of the same, often snide questions. During a 1976 U.S. concert tour to support the Wailers' *Rastaman Vibration* album, Marley was sitting in a Manhattan hotel room on the afternoon of April 30, shortly before leaving for a sound-check for his sold-out show at the Beacon Theater, reading a newspaper article that ridiculed his accent. He slammed the paper on the table. "Fockin' hell!" he raged. "Tell me, why dem mek fun-a me? Why dem mek fun-a Rasta?" He began to spew out his frustration with those who mocked his locks, his religion, his heritage. Several times over the next few years, he invited me to sit in while others interviewed him, just to make the point afterward of how little the situation had changed.

Over the course of seven years (1975-81), I interviewed Marley many, many times, and he was always quite cordial, our conversations open and intensely detailed. Most of the time, he was extremely forthcoming, but on occasion he employed his reflex inscrutability as a shield, and sought to cover his tracks to thwart the curious. After spending nearly three years trying to locate his allegedly Africa-based mother, I found the remarried Cedella Marley Booker living on Tatnall Street in Wilmington, Delaware. She phoned her son to ask if it was all right if she spoke to me, and Bob let out a whooping laugh. "If Timothy work dat hard to find yuh, Maddah," he answered, "ya mus' talk wit' him!"

Gradually, I decided that if I ever wrote a book on Bob Marley, it would have to make the history of Jamaica and the cultural matrix from which Marley emerged comprehensible to an untutored, even wholly uninitiated audience. Moreover, having traveled very extensively in Jamaica over the years, visiting the rural villages in which Bob was reared and the ghetto streets on which he later romped, interviewing his immediate family, in-laws, boyhood friends, bush nannies, Rasta brethren and Trenchtown cohorts, I realized that, besides meticulous research, the book must give itself over in an atmospheric fashion to the confluence of belief systems that informed Marley.

For instance, supernatural events and surreal coincidences are recorded in the book, written as recounted by the principals involved. Whether the reader wants to believe that such "supernatural" events are credible is his or her own decision. My point in adopting an internal sensibility in writing this story was to convey the fact that people around Bob Marley, past and present, indeed believed in "magic" and lived their lives in accordance with those beliefs. I wanted readers to get to know, on an organic basis, one of the most magnificently enigmatic figures of a generation. Virtually all quotes in the book are direct paraphrases of nearly a hundred hours of recollective interviews.

For a man like Bob Marley, life and Jah were one and the same. Marley saw Jah as being the gift of existence; he believed that he, Bob Marley, was in some way eternal, and that he would never be duplicated. He believed that the singularity of every man and woman is Jah's gift. What we struggle to make of it is our sole gift to Jah. He believed the process of that struggle becomes, in time, the truth.

Historically, certain figures sometimes emerge from stagnant, despairing and/or disintegrating cultures to reinterpret old symbols and belief systems and invest them with new meaning. This determination on the part of such individuals may be unconscious, but it can sometimes evolve into an acute awareness that they may indeed have the gift/burden of prophecy. This realization may be followed by the public declaration on the part of such a person that he is merely an instrument of a new source of knowledge, a new direction and



ADRIAN BOOT

Marley relaxing at the controls of his home studio.

a new order.

For Jamaicans, and ultimately for much of the Third World, Bob Marley was such a messianic figure. He maintained that spectral emissaries invaded his sleep to enlist him as a seer. He was frightened by the responsibility, he said, but he had decided to assume it. "By and by," he explained, "Jah show every mon him hand, and Jah has shown I mine."

A man who looked like a skinny lion, moved like a spider and lived like a ghost, Bob Marley died trying to control the duppies within himself. His is a disturbing story about the thin ice that is mere information, the terrible onrush of truth, and the ebb and flow of magic.

## MISTY MORNING

The front page of the *Daily Gleaner* on Tuesday February 6, 1945 was dominated by the news of the world at war. The Red Army of Marshal Zhukov was within thirty-five miles of the Reich capital and Patton's tanks were boring deeper through the Siegfried Line, while, on the other side of the planet, planes from the British carrier *Indefatigable* were bombing Japanese strongholds in Sumatra and General Douglas MacArthur's forces had returned to Manila.

In the local news, there were continued reports of a slump in Jamaican citrus production for the war effort (blamed on the hazards of the shipping routes to Britain), as well as shortages of beef, petrol and matchsticks. Farm workers had just been airlifted from Montego Bay to Florida to help harvest crops there. The day before, the Bishop of Kingston opened the annual Anglican Synod by hosting a cricket match in Sabina Park between the clergy and the police. Later that afternoon, Lady Huggins was honored at the nearby Jamaica Turf Club and Mrs. McWhinnie gave a tea.

There was no mention in the *Gleaner*, however, of an event which took place during the early hours of the morning in the rural parish of St. Ann. Nineteen-year-old Cedella Marley had given birth to her first child. The moonfaced Cedella—or Ciddy, as she was called—had had a difficult pregnancy and had suffered greatly from morning sickness. When she went into labor on Sunday evening, she was taken to the house of her father, Omeriah Malcolm—a black man. She remained in labor through all of Monday; at 2:30 the following morning

Robert Nesta was finally delivered: a fawn-colored boy with thin lips and the slender pointed nose of his father, Captain Norval Sinclair Marley—a white man.

The afterbirth was carefully wrapped in a page from the *Gleaner* and buried at the foot of a young mango sapling that would from that day forth be Robert Nesta Marley's "fren' tree": it would grow as tall and as strong as he wished it to, its health and height reflecting his care; it would bend with the passage of time in the same direction as its cultivator.

Ciddy was fed mint tea and arrowroot while Omeriah placed the child on a rusty vegetable scale taken from his roadside produce stand: Robert weighed exactly six and a half pounds. Swaddled in a blue and white nightgown made by Ciddy from muslin Omeriah had ordered from a wholesaler in Kingston, he was then laid in a crib beside his mother's bed that was cushioned with a crocus bag.

As Ciddy and child had slept soundly under Omeriah's roof, a group of young "kidren" playing outside sang a "ring song" (a traditional ditty that accompanied games played in a circle) that ricocheted through the hills:

*Dere's a black boy in de ring, tra la la la la,  
Dere's a black boy in de ring, tra la la la la,  
Him like sugar, I like plum, tra la la la la,  
Him cyan't be my lover nuh, tra la la la la ...*

"De Devil 'im want dat lickle bwai (little boy)."

Omeriah Malcolm was shaken to hear himself whispering this ghoulish assertion and no less surprised by the fear and the weariness in his own voice. "Somebody science 'im," he muttered to himself, "put duppy on 'im bwai."

His four-month-old grandson had suddenly been taken ill, and Omeriah was certain that malevolent forces were responsible. Only that morning, Ciddy had been tending to her son in the usual way, breast-feeding him and then placing him on a rubber sheet in her one-room shack while she did her share of the family sewing—mending the clothes of her five brothers and three sisters. Sensing that all was well and feeling a trifle peckish, she had double-checked the child around noontime and then hurried down the hill to buy a sweet at the grocery shop. Upon her return not ten minutes later, she found him lying on his stomach quivering, water dripping from his nose. He was making short coughing noises.

She lifted him up and stroked his brow, thinking he had not digested his milk. His stomach tightened and he threw up. Then his neck went limp and his eyes rolled back.

Ciddy screamed for help, and her sister Enid, who had been washing clothes outside, ran to get Omeriah and Yaya, their grandmother, both of whom lived within walking distance.

Omeriah examined the child gravely and decided that an evil spirit had touched him during Ciddy's absence. Yaya concurred, and the father and grandmother discussed possible remedies. At length, it was decided that he would mix a potion of susumba bush, garden bitters, cotton leaves, black joint, baby-gripe, hug-me-close and sweetcup, while she fetched a medicinal love charm to protect the child from further demonic assaults. These things accomplished, the boy was consigned to a trio of around-the-clock monitors, consisting of Ciddy, Enid and Auntie Beatrice Wilby, the elderly cousin who had served as Ciddy's midwife. There was little to do but wait and pray for the shadow to pass from him.

As dusk approached, the boy began to breathe more freely and his nurses reacted with exclamations of relief.

"Yahso! What a way 'im revive!" said Enid.

"De potion an' amulet favor me pickney!" said Cedella, her eyes wet and swollen.

"You cyan't block de powers of de Almighty," said Beatrice. "T'anks and honor fe de Holiest One, whose name is Goodness and Love, fe de helpless chile and him pickney mumma!"

But Omeriah, hearing the exultations from across the rise, was not so quick to celebrate or to dismiss the significance of the incident. Every illness, he knew, was a visitation of either Satan or the Almighty. For what reason, he asked himself,

would a suckling become the target of a duppy? "Sure as God mek water a-cool an' fire a-burn," he thought, "dat bwai been in de firs' grasp of Nookoo, Mother Death 'erself. And, give t'anks and bow de head, was only de swiftness of de retaliation dat expelled de demon."

Omeriah was standing by himself on the veranda of the one-story dwelling known as "Big House" in the village of Nine Miles. It was a handsome, though steadily deteriorating house built fifty years before by the Malcolm family matriarch Yaya (Katherine Malcolm) in the style of an English planter's residence. The project was financed with the profits yielded by her bountiful farmlands. With two full-sized bedrooms (usually reserved for boarders), a dining room, living room, large kitchen and a proper parlor, as well as several cottages built off the main house, it was easily the most imposing complex within running distance. Situated all alone near the top of a stepped glen that was the natural focal point of Nine Miles, Big House was a source of pride for all who lived within sight of it.

Omeriah removed his sweat-stained field cap and rubbed his rough palms on the knees of the heavy, gray cotton work pants of British manufacture that he was wearing (commonly called "ol' ironcloth"). He took a short swing from a long-necked bottle of Appleton rum, then sprinkled just as much as he had swallowed on the ground to "'member" the benign and watchful spirits of his ancestors. A cock crowed into the amber glow filtering through the palm forest in the western hills, announcing the sunset. Malcolm set his head back for a more generous gulp of liquor, then put the bottle down on a rickety bench and sat on the sagging wooden railing, gazing out over the family homestead and the village of Nine Miles.

Before him was a teeming, impossibly tangled network of clumpish knolls, steep spindletop hills and intersecting ravines, thick with groves of palm, bamboo, mango, coco and

#### Tuff Gong: "Nuh scalpel shall crease me flesh!"



KIM GOTTLIEB



World Radio History



ackee, and interspersed with stands of cedar, mahoe and mahogany. Clinging to the high ground were the huts and sheds of the population, some constructed of woven withies with thatched roofs, the sturdier ones built of "Spanish walling" (masonry fill inside a wooden frame) and topped with patchwork arrangements of corrugated zinc sheets. They had dirt floors and no more than two tiny rooms—one a closet for storing utensils and foodstuffs and the other for sleeping. Each hut had a low outdoor fireplace and a small pen for young livestock. There was always an apron of rock-hard ground in front, the rust-colored clay pounded solid by the bare feet of cousins and cousins of cousins. Fat-bellied goats, gray with black undersides, munching and worrying pockets of trash and table scraps that swarmed with gnatlike tropical pests called sour flies, were tethered in the labyrinth of bark-stripped tree trunks surrounding the huts.

This was the domain of the Malcolms, Willoughbys, Lemon-iouises, Lewises, Davises and a dozen other closely related families who had been farming in this region since two hundred years before the abolition of slavery in 1838. During the era of the great plantations that began in the early 1700s the wide, arching belt of sugar estates that stretched along the north coast from St. Ann's Bay through Montego Bay to Savanna-la-Mar made their absentee proprietors fabulously wealthy. While the flatlands that stretched to the sea were given over to sugar cane, the tenant slaves were allowed to cultivate "provision ground" in the mountain lands and to sell or barter what produce the estates did not require in the towns and cities.

The Malcolms were among the most prosperous of their descendants, and Omeriah had become Nine Miles' most respected citizen, the *custos*. (*Custos* was originally a Jamaican title for the colonial magistrate; the meaning had been expanded over the years to include the principal landowners and local figures esteemed for their outstanding wealth, prudence and diplomatic capabilities.)

A powerfully built man in his mid-fifties, with a large globular head, strong, squarish chin, wide nose and warm caramel eyes, Omeriah had a gentle, ageless quality about him that made him popular with children and with women. Besides the nine children with his wife Alberta, he'd had a dozen others with various ladies in the district, most of these liaisons occurring after the death of his lawful spouse in 1935, the same year that his sister Rittenella had passed on. Still, Alberta Malcolm had accepted her husband's early meanderings without complaint and even a hint of pride. After all, it was obvious to her that he was no mere sportin' man; he had honorably and discreetly helped to provide for each of his illegitimate offspring.

As ambitious and industrious as he was amorous, Omeriah deftly cultivated a sizeable piece of prime cropland in a sector called Smith, a fertile valley lying between Eight Miles and the village of Rhoden Hall in the district of Stepney. He also ran a bakery, a grocery store and a loosely organized dry goods concern that sold English cloth for making dresses, suits and trousers, and offered other services, such as cobbling shoes and repairing machinery. In addition, he owned a modest but profitable coffee factory. His wife, the former Alberta Willoughby, had been equally well off by rural standards; her parents had title to considerable acreage that was densely planted with coffee, bananas, oranges and tangerines.

But the respect accorded Omeriah by his neighbors was inspired by none of these material assets (nor his burgeoning brood) so much as by his reputation as an accomplished herbalist and "myalman"—a person who possessed the knowledge and the power to deflect or defuse the machinations of obeah and to heal with folk medicine.

Omeriah had been schooled in the ancient myalist arts by his father, Robert "Uncle Day" Malcolm, who was descended from the Cromanty slaves shipped to Jamaica from the Gold Coast in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The Cromanty were an especially fierce Akan tribe that was never tamed by the slave bosses and the colonial overlords, and Cromanty leaders Tackey and Cudjoe were the instiga-

*"Tikya (take care) de blackheart mon, children; me seh don' go near 'im, fe even lions fear 'im. 'Im de cursed Rastamon."*

tors of two of the most savage slave uprisings of the plantation era. Not even the indomitable Maroons, who had escaped early on into the impenetrable cockpit country in the interior of Jamaica and who were bound by the provisions of their treaty with the British to cooperate in the suppression of other renegades, ever succeeded in diminishing the Cromanty's appetite for freedom at any price. Indeed, the Maroons eventually adopted the Cromanty dialect as their secret language, and learned the healing qualities of such island herbs as kema weed, lion's tail and hundreds of others.

The runaway slaves steadily grew more cunning and vengeful, few more intensely so than the Maroons, who paid the Cromanty another compliment by learning and applying with chilling regularity the ancient Cromanty Curse, through which the hand of the oppressor is caused to turn upon its owner. The Akan fervently believed that it was sorcery that had brought them to the West Indies in the first place, so turnabout seemed fair play: many a cruel slave boss committed suicide shortly after the curse had been cast upon him.

Although schooled in the myalistic Cromanty arts since adolescence, Omeriah had never had the occasion nor the inclination to pronounce such a sentence as the Curse on any person. On the contrary, he was appalled by such practices and had devoted himself to thwarting what he saw as abuses of spiritual powers. Yet Omeriah was also aware that the medicine man and the diviner must know how to do in order to undo, and thus Omeriah had had to acquaint himself with obeah, the Dark Sciences, guzu-guzu and the hierarchies of the sorcerer's otherworldly confederates.

In Africa, Omeriah's father had explained, the use of magic was a routine practice in the service of succor and protection, its practitioners functioning as priests and philosophers. But in Jamaica, it gradually evolved from a buffer against injustice in slavery days into another weapon in the unending modern guerilla warfare of necromancy. In such an environment, no man could guess what fate held in store for him. And few could expect a life untouched by the vagaries of hoodoo and wizardry.

"When de Lawd summon me, ago deh yah," said Omeriah quietly as he shifted position on the porch rail, the rum enhancing the reverence with which he intoned to himself the Jamaican variation of the African prayer of acceptance of God's will. Omeriah's dark thoughts were interrupted by a sudden cloudburst and a downpour, rippling sheets of rain winding and stabbing their way into the nooks and crannies of the Nine Miles settlement.

For Omeriah, and for rural Jamaicans in general, the island's erratic rainstorms were accompanied by many pleasant complications. A downpour soothed tempers agitated by the otherwise incessant heat, temporarily lowering the temperature and turning the sticky, stupefying wind into a sweat-cooling balm. And the rain served as a botanical catalyst, releasing dormant or otherwise sun-deadened fragrances from the tropical plants, flowers, fruits and scrubs that coat the landscape. But the Jamaican downpours could also be

*"Sure as God mek water a-cool an' fire a-burn," Omeriah thought, "dat bwai been in de firs' grasp of Nookoo, Mother Death 'erself."*

unsettling, the mist lingering in the still air like a veil, shrouding the scene with a casual solemnity that masked the cruelty and capriciousness of the elements. For Jamaicans like Omeriah, the showers could turn an empty field into a duppy dancing ground or a bleak, hollow cul-de-sac into a demon-filled quarry, and transform the benign countryside into an ominous wilderness. And the rain carried a message: Jamaica is an unknowable place with eternal rhythms and undercurrents that flow around—and often through—its human guests with exquisite authority.

More than anything else, the spooky aftereffects of rural rainstorms caused men like Omeriah Malcolm to think of his country as the Land of Look Behind: a repository of magic and spells and spirits and enigmas where no one could walk his plot of ground in a straight line, either literally or figuratively, due to the countless queer, invisible obstacles lying between him and the completion of the most mundane errand. Omeriah believed that, given the circumstances, the best course was a casual zigzag which would confuse the duppies that might be lurking about. And Omeriah advised those who were so unfortunate as to be accosted by a duppy to stop and quickly make an X in the soil: a duppy can only count to nine, so he would be detained at that spot, attempting in vain to count to ten, until the rain or wind washed the X away.

Imagine! Even a young child, laying helpless in a shack, cannot avoid bumping into nameless misfortunes! thought Omeriah as he gazed out on the dripping scene in front of the porch, still in the grip of the rain's spell.

Yet, such early intrusions upon the life-soul of Ciddy's child could possibly have been prevented. The boy's mother had not even been baptized until she discovered that she was pregnant. The foolish, woeful girl had to be taken down to the Shiloh Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith in the village of Alva amidst a flurry of "susu" (local gossip), to be immersed and christened in the baptismal pool under the hasty guidance of Elder Thomas.

"And what a rude, stupid mumu business dis yar pickney-mumma daughter o' mine bring 'pon 'erself!" Omeriah barked, low and gravelly, sucking down another mouthful of rum. She had been seduced by that old "bockra busha" (white overseer) in red tunic, canvas leggings and shin boots, Captain Marley of the British West India Regiment. Marley was a pipe-puffing superintendent for the crown lands, who came riding into Nine Miles almost two years ago on a fine government-bought horse trying to induce poor country people to sow crops or even resettle in the deepest sections of the "John Williams" jungle, the largely uninhabited "bridal lands" beyond the point where the crudest roads quit.

Those were his activities during the day. At night, while a tenant in Big House, the short, soft-spoken man had been fornicating with Malcolm's seventeen-year-old Ciddy! The silly girl lying with a white man at least two or three years her father's senior! At least Marley had the decency to marry her many months later, but it had been the Devil's play-play from the start. A dumb, "bungo-bessy" (an adjective for unseemly conduct by a rural female) relationship carried on in trite

secrecy, nourished on illicit assignations, instigated by a British Jamaican with money and position who had lured an innocent black girl to his bed with a boldness that recalled the license of plantation owners in slavery days.

And then into the world comes a Creole pickney, named Robert after Marley's brother—not Omeriah's father—but, regardless, still a "slave name." (Robert Malcolm was believed by the family to have originally been a plantation owner's surname, which he then bestowed on Uncle Day.) And where is Captain Marley now that his son suffers? Gone—a Kingston in shame, under a mantle of disgrace from his own family for being so idiotic as to legally wed a "foo-foo" (foolish) country wail naive enough to believe his "fuck-a-bush" (backwoods seduction) talk of love!

Now the baby was stranded by his bloodlines, and beset by every other cultural tribulation, right in the center of nowhere. In Jamaica, the African folk traditions of the slaves and their descendants and the European traditions of the white rulers are constantly at odds. But even among blacks, the values of whites and mulattoes are openly preferred to their own natural Akan-West Indian ethos. Omeriah did not share the widespread opinion that it was better to be brown than black, fair than brown. And for status-conscious Jamaican blacks to go around wearing heavy English boots and dark Manchester serge suits in the hot tropical sun while trying, as so many did, to talk like Oxford graduates struck him as madness.

The boy will have plenty of time to sort out the sorrows of his heritage, Omeriah thought. And what's the difference? The worse things got, the better things got, the more they remained the same. Omeriah remembered something his own father used to say: "Changey fe changey, black daag fe monkey." It was a maxim steeped in self-hatred and resignation. The monkey symbolized the colored man and the dog the full-blooded black. The message: there was no gain in the exchange; one is as badly off afterward as before.

Thoroughly disgusted and troubled by the evils that had cropped up in their midst during the day, Omeriah went out behind the pig poke in the gathering darkness to relieve himself. The last traces of twilight hovered above the treetops as he went to bed, where he slept fitfully. Last evening he had dreamt of death, a sure sign of impending birth in the family. Tonight he dreamt of copper and of animal feces, both good omens. And then deep in the night he dreamt of fire, which signifies confusion, and of snakes, a sign that enemies were plotting the destruction of a loved one.

Two months later, something occurred that reinforced Omeriah's worst apprehensions. On the very morning that Ciddy had moved herself and the child out of Omeriah's house and into her own shack, she had undressed the baby in his new home, carefully removed Yaya's love amulet, and bathed him in her white enamel wash basin, using a new cake of store-bought brown soap. A fresh change of clothes laid out next to the child, she had begun powdering him when she realized the amulet was nowhere in sight. She began searching for it, going over every tabletop, sifting through the discarded clothing on the floor, crouching down and peering into every niche, crack and corner. Again and again and again. And as her anxiety approached its peak, a sudden, freezing breeze blew over her, covering her entire body with a rigid pebblework of clammy goose bumps.

Sinking to her knees, burying her face in her trembling, powder-caked hands, she burst into tears. She knew that she was not going to find the talisman.

"Nesta! Nesta! Where 'ave ya gone to dis yar day?" called Ciddy Marley, striding out of her shack and into the late afternoon heat. Blinded by the sun's low glare, she shielded her eyes with one hand and squinted around the grounds, looking for her errant four-year-old son.

"Roslyn!" she hollered, addressing Nesta's godmother, Roslyn Downs, who was sauntering along a lower trail that bisected the one leading to Ciddy's place. A huge basket of "coco" (taro) tubers was balanced on her turbaned head.



Marley the modern myalman, who had the will and the means to thwart evil wrought by duppies.

"'Avè ya seen me Nesta? Him gone and me don' know wheres!"

"Ah mus' say no fe sure Missah Marley" Roslyn replied, with the affectionate deference of an older mother sharing the concern of a younger one. They were in the midst of discussing the matter when the tot appeared in the distance, holding fast to the thick neck of David Malcolm as Ciddy's portly brother pedaled a heavy steel bicycle up the hill toward them.

"Cho!" Ciddy raged, for the benefit of Auntie Roslyn. "Mercy, my Gawd! Dat bwai an 'im foolishness gwan mek me heart pop out me chest!"

Actually, Ciddy had momentarily forgotten that David had come by earlier to take Nesta—she much preferred to call him by his middle name—along on a trip to the post office for Omeriah, so overwhelmed was she by the chores of the morning: cooking, cleaning, chopping wood, feeding the animals. Her feigned anger did not fool Roslyn, she knew, but it helped chase the sadness she felt welling up inside her as she watched her skinny little boy, grinning with glee as he hugged the broad back of his jolly twenty-three-year-old uncle.

One of the first times she had ever seen Captain Marley, he was giving David a ride on the gleaming back of his sweat-drenched horse as he guided it to Yaya's house to inquire about a room. Norval had been working in the area for some time, living first in the nearby district of Sterling with a family named Morris, then with some other people in a village called Ballantine, and then in the house of a man named Luther Flynn in Stepney. Norval was well liked by the local children, always sending them off to buy him pipe tobacco and rewarding them with two shillings, and when his favorites would be making trips with their parents to the surrounding towns, he'd also give them spending money. David was one of his favorites.

Watching as the battered, overburdened bicycle approached, Ciddy's face clouded over and she fell silent. Roslyn saw the change in Ciddy's mood and moved on as the girl offered a distant, "Walk safe now, Auntie," in farewell.

Ciddy was remembering the first night she had stayed with

Norval in his room at Yaya's—the rum and tobacco on his breath, the sandpaper sensation of her face held against the stiff white whiskers that covered his jaws, and the rough-skinned hands that slid up under her chemise and caressed her buttocks as he pressed her back onto the firm mattress of his bed. It was the finest bed she had ever slept in.

Naked together in the moonlit room, he spoke to her of marriage and children, of sharing the quiet last years of his life and the wealth of his fine family. And she believed him, nuzzling against his hairy chest, pulling his long arms, firm as fenceposts, around her small frame.

He said he liked her musical laugh, and when they went for walks in the bridal lands, he would ask her to sing. Beaming, she'd give a fervent rendition of "I'm Going To Lay My Sins Down By The Riverside," projecting her resonant alto as she had that Easter morning in Rhoden Hall's Bible school when she'd won the hymn contest, beating out her sister Gloria. (At the school picnic the following day, she received as her prize a home-baked gingerbread "bun"—an oblong, honey-glazed holiday cake traditionally eaten with slices of cheese.)

"Ya mek a fine songstress, chile," the teacher had told her before the entire class. "It please Gawd ta 'ear memory verse, golden text and holy musical praise fe His handiwork!"

Pleasing God, pleasing her family and friends, pleasing Captain Marley, pleasing herself—it had all seemed so easy. When she sang, all of these demands on her spirit seemed to dovetail neatly into a joyful unity. But that budding sense of completeness was soon to burst at its tender seams.

She and the captain were wed on a breezeless Friday in June, 1944 in a stiff, perfunctory rite that represented an ending rather than a beginning. Prior to the ceremony, Norval had revealed to his pregnant bride that he was leaving Nine Miles the next day for Kingston, and that he had no intention of returning. Ciddy's slow-blinking eyes burned and blurred with bitter tears as he explained that he had informed his family of his relationship with her, and that they had reacted by denouncing the union and disinheriting him.

The vows were exchanged at Yaya's house, with Ivy, another of Ciddy's sisters, serving as bridesmaid. Hubert Davis, a close friend and neighbor of Omeriah, was the best man. Ciddy wore a plain white dress with three-quarter-length sleeves made for her by Ivy. The captain wore a dark suit. Afterward, the wedding party and a few close friends chatted quietly, sipping punch and breaking off pieces of a long, wide loaf of banquet bread; Norval had not wanted the fuss of a fancy iced cake. It was one month before Ciddy's nineteenth birthday.

Riding off on his horse the next morning, complaining of an inflamed back, Norval promised to return every weekend until the child arrived. But over the course of Ciddy's pregnancy, he paid only two brief visits. Heartbroken, she sought counsel from Omeriah, who told her to put aside her grief and learn from her indiscretions. The rest of the clan was supportive, and everyone seemed to adore her boy. While Omeriah made no attempt to disguise the fact that Nesta was his pet, Ciddy thought it a pity that David, her father's best hand in the fields, had elected to move to Maryland in 1945 to work as a laborer for the War Food Administration. Industrious, good-natured, optimistic—but a bit restless—he was an almost ideal role model for Nesta, and as it was, the boy insisted on shadowing his every move during his visits.

"Choi!" Ciddy exclaimed again with mock scorn as David brought the bicycle to a halt before her. "Where ya tek me pickney? Nesta! Where ha uncle tek ya seh?" Peeking over David's massive shoulder, he answered his mother meekly, but the expression in his deep, dun-colored eyes startled her. Something about the boy's direct gaze had always made her feel slightly skittish and intimidated. There was an intelligence in his eyes that belied his tender years. The boy had proven sufficiently precocious by his fourth birthday to move Ciddy to enroll him at Stepney School nearly a year ahead of schedule. Miss Isaacs, the teacher, immediately confirmed that it was the right thing to do, noting that Nesta seemed as smart as a child twice his age. But still his mother found that she felt most comfortable in her parental role when she avoided those cool stares of his.

"Well, I mus' say dat yuh are in dem ackee," she chided David with a giggle. She meant that David appeared well fed and happy, i.e. well provided with ackee, the podlike, large-seeded fruit of West African origin that is a Jamaican staple.

David rubbed his barrel-sized belly and laughed with a rolling wheeze, telling his sister that he had been doing well in Maryland and eating rich American fare as a consequence, but that it would be good to have home-cooked food fresh from Omeriah's farmlands again. Her brother's visit coincided with the tail end of a harvest, and tonight there was to be a dusk-to-dawn shelling session at Omeriah's house to celebrate a good corn crop.

By custom, everyone in the clan was expected to toil in Omeriah and Yaya's fields, and since the age of five Ciddy had done her share, sometimes attending school only three days a week, reserving the rest for the group efforts of clearing and burning away the old "top 'n' lop," plowing, harrowing, fertilizing, planting, weeding, reaping.

Sometimes the tasks along the way were tedious, particularly when everyone kept to themselves as they worked. But Ciddy was uplifted when the men joined together in diggin' songs, chanting like militia on the march as their pickaxes fell to loosen the dirt for corn, gungu peas, cassava, callaloo, or to make the hundreds of foot-high mounds of dirt, called "yam-hills," in which the root of the tuber would be planted. Freely passing the rum bottle with wet smiles and bloodshot winks, one man would "raise" a tune, calling out a series of lines, and the others would respond with the "bobbin," the brief refrain that set the pace for the task at hand:

*Toa-dy, Toa-dy, min' yar self! (Toa-dy! Toa-dy!)  
Min' yar self mek I plant me corn! (Toa-dy! Toa-dy!)  
Plant me yam fe go court me gall! (Toa-dy! Toa-dy!)*

In the last year, Nesta had begun to accompany his mother to the fields at Smith, where he carried a water pail and

messages back and forth between his relatives, and was made to listen carefully as they took time out to instruct him in various techniques of tillage. Thus initiated into bush agriculture, he was also made to feel included in the many successes of the time-honored procedures. The shelling matches were the final and most enjoyable stage of the work cycle, and Ciddy took a special delight in seeing how Nesta was mesmerized by the community spectacle.

"Nesta, is ya too weary fe go a shellin' match dis yere night at Grandpapa Omeriah's?" she teased, as she bade David goodbye and moved toward the shack.

"Seh nuh, Mumma!" he pleaded with flailing arms, bursting with exaggerated energy. "Seh nuh, Mumma!"

Both David and Ciddy exploded in laughter at this earnest display, and she bounced him in her arms reassuringly, then set him down.

"Den run fe fetch da washbasin so I cyan tidy yuh up nicely so!" she ordered, sending him scurrying to the cooking shed, as David rode down toward Omeriah's house to assist in the preparations for that night.

All day long, since first light, men and women in starkly sun-bleached frocks and work clothes had been bringing the silky ears of unshelled corn from Smith, heaped in huge "cuta-coos" (baskets with hemp shoulder straps), brimming over in donkey carts and piled high in the canvas aprons gripped at their corners to form bulging pouches. Nesta had watched them arriving from the shack window at dawn, the procession moving noiselessly into the heart of Nine Miles, heads bobbing in and out of the wisps and spirals of dewy fog. Awakened by the braying of a stubborn jackass, he had peered over the sill and abruptly ducked back down again, uncertain whether he was witnessing a scene from this world or the next.

Now, as he rushed inside the shack, fetching the washbasin that was leaning against the kick-and-buck and then hopping in place to snatch down his best pair of overalls, which hung from the highest nail above the straw bed, he reviewed the recurring mental images of the last twelve hours. Reflexively he looked out the window again into the rapidly descending dusk, puzzling over the secrets of morning before the sun and of night before the moon.

In palm-obscured pockets all over the far hills, dinner stoves could be seen glowing ever brighter, the distant orange-red cores of their fires flickering like lightning bugs. Nesta turned to find himself hoisted to the table top by Mumma, who stripped him naked, set him back down and scrubbed him sore with a coarse white rag tangy with soap. The dunking of his head in the basin—almost before he could think to shut his mouth and eyes—signaled the end of the "tidy-nice." With the day's dust and stickiness washed away, he saw the torches in the valley. Floating alone in the inky twilight, clustering in corners of the farthest ravines and then spilling onto the sloping trails leading into Nine Miles, they appeared to Nesta as long, swaying rivulets of flame. The sound of vigorous voices grew louder, and the air thickened with the scent of burning rubber as the thin streams of light snaked nearer—the men holding stick-skewered hunks of burning tires (which doubled as an insect repellent) and talking "boasty" like barking dogs, the women berating them or chattering among themselves, the children squealing and romping in and out of the light shed by the trembling, smelly torches.

Nesta was so excited by such sights that he immediately wet his overalls, and had to endure a dimly felt spanking by Mumma before he could thread his way through the crowd of people that surrounded Omeriah's massive bonfire, his head swimming with the kinetic shadow play of a full-tilt "jamma," a raucous country night picnic.

It was almost too much to take in. Dozens of buxom women in bright print dresses hunkered close together in susu sessions at one end of the blaze as they systematically tore open the corn husks. The bare ears were passed along to the opposite side, where sinewy male hands stripped the raw, hard kernels from the cobs with a crunching corkscrew

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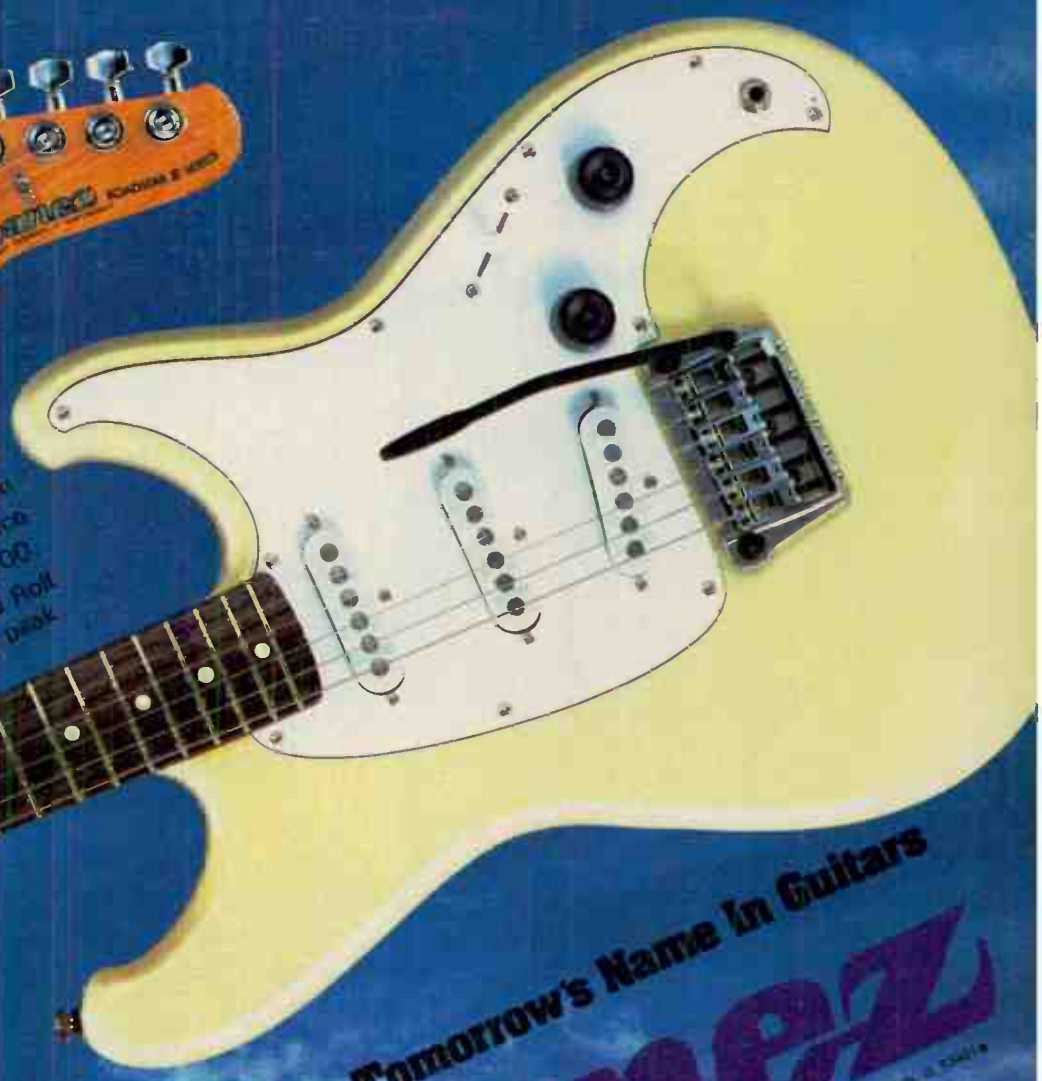
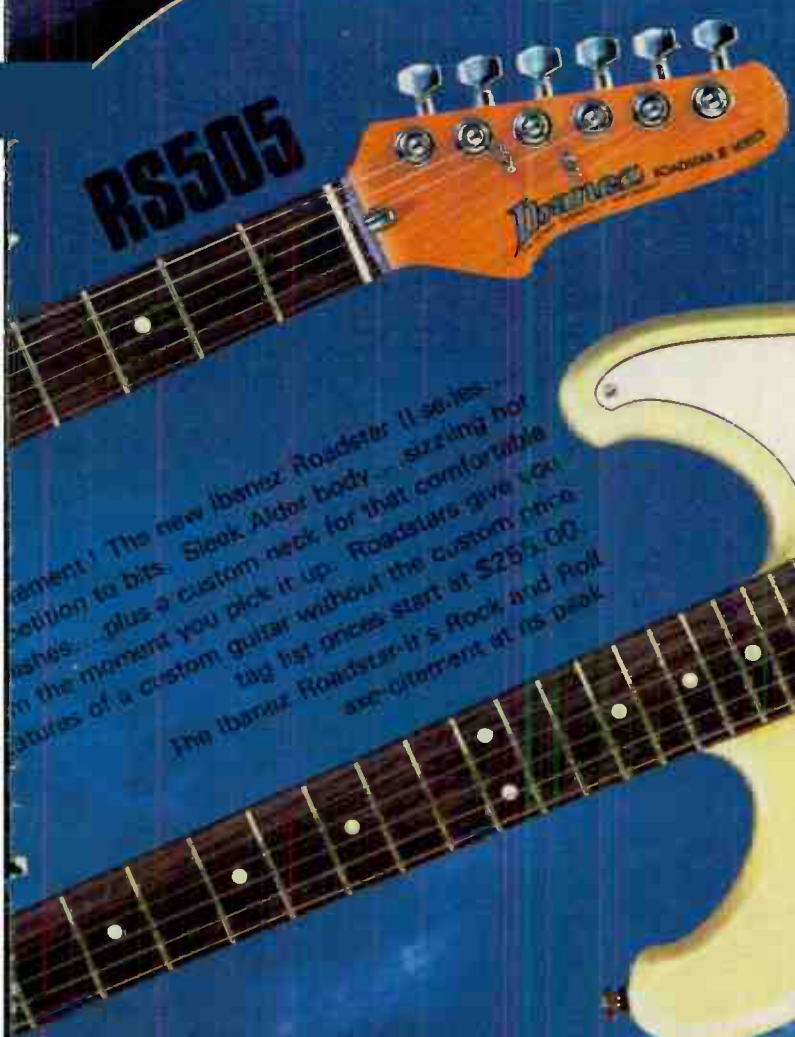
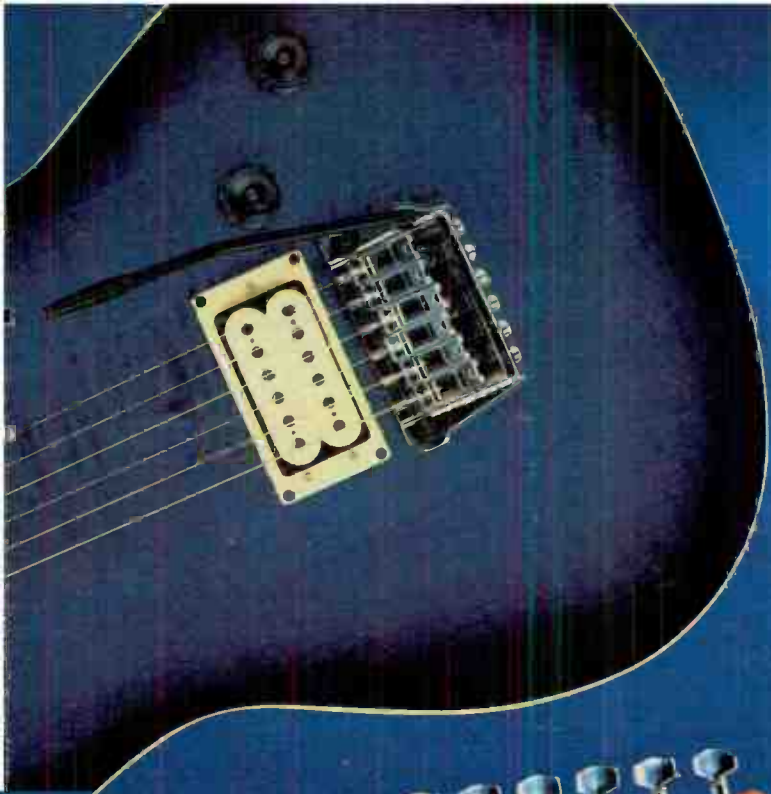
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motion, the kernels spilling into crocus bags between their knees. Amid all this furious activity, everyone somehow found a way to conduct lively conversations, to consume copious amounts of white rum, and to empty huge tin platters heaped with roasted breadfruit, cho-cho squash sopping with butter, curried goat, fried grunt fish, peppery jerk pork sizzling with the fumes of allspice and charcoal, and a fruit salad of starapples, oranges, grapefruit and sweetened milk called "matrimony."

As the night deepened and the manic intensity of the work subsided to a dogged tempo, the clamoring and feasting gave way to songs, riddles, Anancy stories and tales of Africa. This was the part of the evening Nesta loved most, and he found a good spot on the trunk of a felled apple tree next to Neville Livingston, nicknamed Bunny, a companion from Stepney School. Seated behind them were Ciddy and Bunny's father, lantern-jawed Thaddius "Toddy" Livingston, an itinerant carpenter and mason well liked by the Malcolms (and said to be quite fond of Ciddy).

A man leapt up to tell of the glory of the black race in "de modern age," rhapsodizing with considerable eloquence about the grandeur of the reign of His Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, two hundred twenty-fifth heir to the Solomonic throne, who had routed Mussolini and his Fascist invaders in 1941, some eight years before. It was one of the first glorious victories of the Second World War, the man recounted, awed at how merciful Selassie had been toward the vanquished Italians and how generous he was to his own brave forces.

Sensing he had captured his audience, the story teller continued. On one occasion, after Selassie had personally dispensed gifts to a multitude of Ethiopian soldiers, a lowly corporal known to few of the rank and file approached His Majesty and complained that he had been excluded from the emperor's benevolent expressions of gratitude and largess.

"You lie!" thundered Selassie, citing the precise place, day, hour and amount of the soldier's reward. The corporal

dropped to the ground and hid his face in terror and shame, crawling away from the emperor's magnificent presence. But Selassie demanded that the man rise to his feet again and repent of his falsehood. Weeping and wailing, the corporal did so, and as His Majesty turned to go, he took pity on the soldier and tossed him a roll of banknotes.

Everyone around the bonfire was breathless at the wonder of the tale, but its teller was not finished. Just prior to His Majesty's coronation in 1930—the portentous event having been foretold by Marcus Garvey, an enlightened and courageous son of Jamaica—the Duke of Gloucester had been granted an audience with Selassie, during which he returned the golden scepter of the House of Judah, stolen from Ethiopia in antiquity by Julius Caesar, who had made use of it to build the Roman Empire. Following the imperial coronation, the duke became intoxicated and wandered into the bush, where he ate a magical strain of brush weed that removed his mortal disguise and allowed the emperor, with the help of his golden scepter, to recognize the duke's true identity: the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar, the infernal last king of Babylon.

Hatching a plan that hastened the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy, Selassie tricked the duke into returning to England with an intricate medal for King George V that actually was a mystic seal of vengeance. When the British monarch saw the seal, his body froze like unto Lot's wife, and he perished soon afterward. The duke assumed the throne and then renounced it in favor of George VI, secure in his ultimate aim: to be reincarnated as the final sovereign of Evilitude in the dreadful Last Days.

"Praise de teachar! Prophecy fulfilled!" whooped the rum-inflamed guests huddled around Omeriah's crackling embers. Then a strange quivering shot through the group, followed by a sudden silence. It felt as if the entire congregation was engaged in grave inner meditations on their own individual

*continued on page 122*

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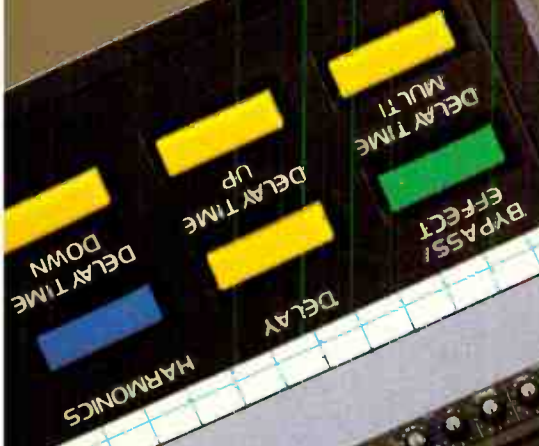
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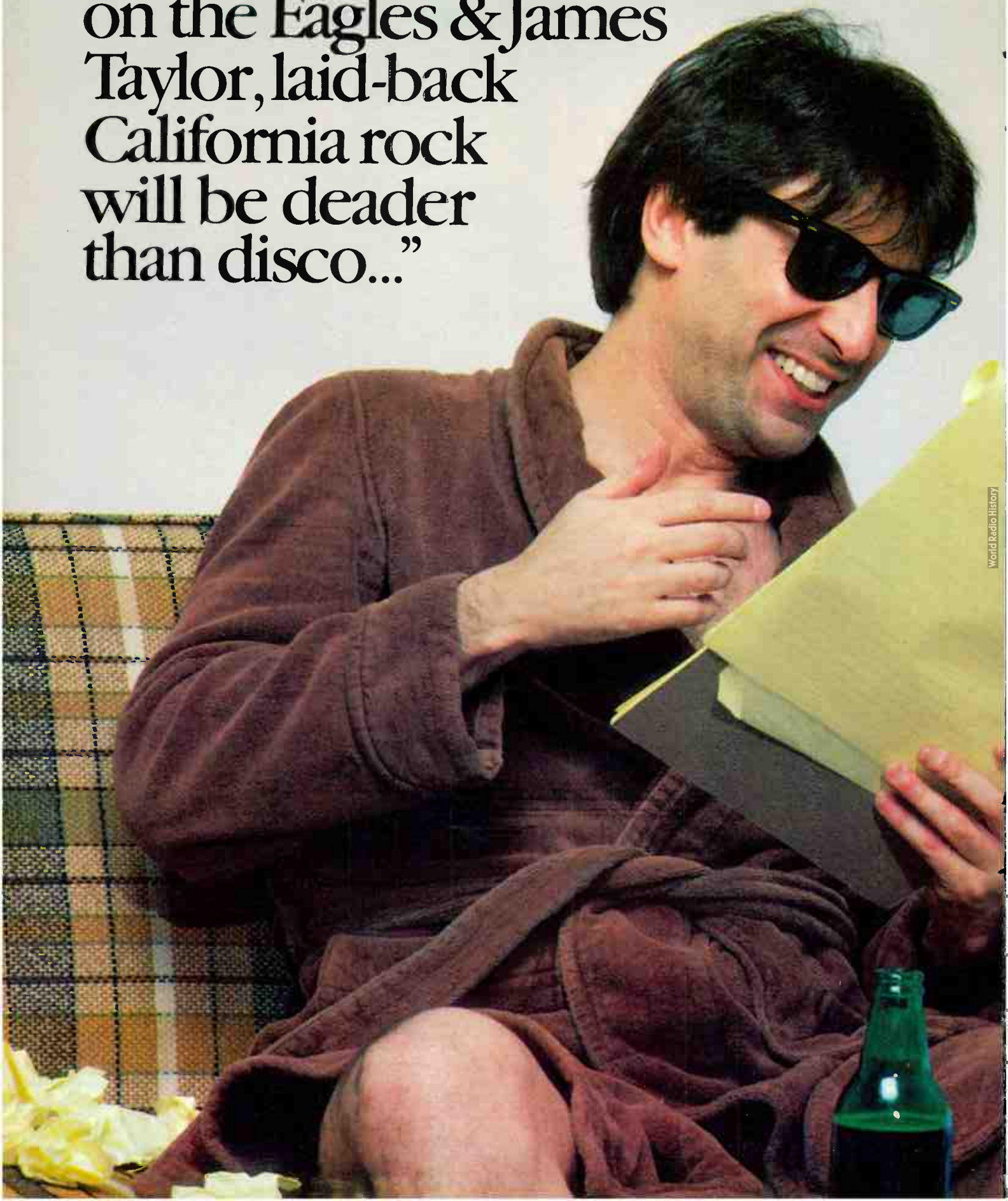
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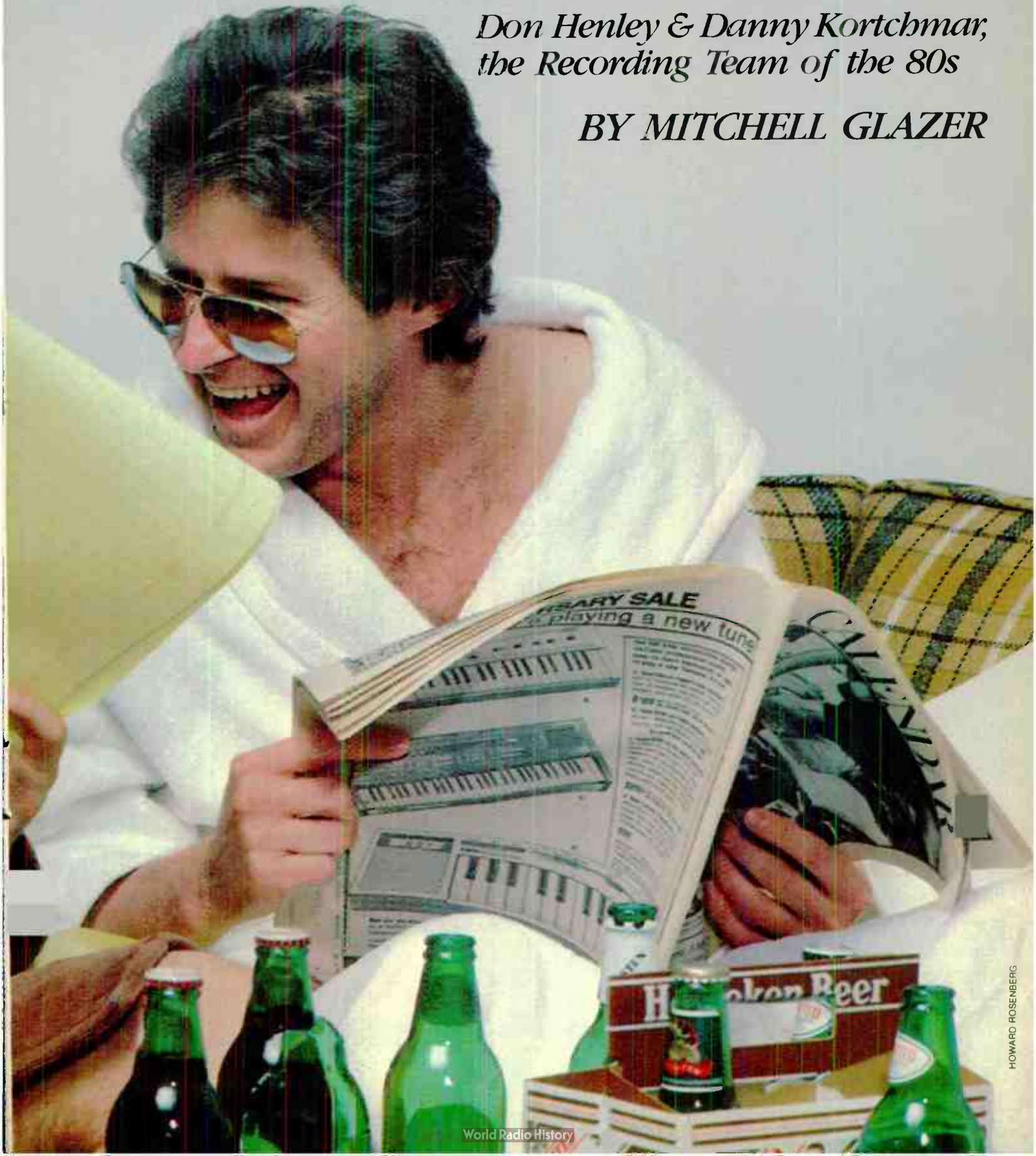
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“I love it, Danny..  
I love it...”

*Don Henley & Danny Kortchmar,  
the Recording Team of the 80s*

**BY MITCHELL GLAZER**



Los Angeles won't survive the night. Not a chance. For seven days the storms have chewed up the city. Forget the coastline; it's sliding into the blackened Pacific like a bad dream. Every morning the front desk calls cheerfully with another horror story. "Good morning sir, a tornado leveled ten blocks of downtown L.A.... Good morning sir, did you happen to feel that little earthquake we had around dawn?... Good morning sir, police helicopters spotted a cloud of locusts moving towards Santa Monica." The Universal Studio Tour is shut down and Charlton Heston is clamoring for a blood sacrifice. It's an ugly movie.

And tonight as I slide sideways down Laurel Canyon toward the glossy Record One recording studio and a meeting with Don Henley and Danny "Kootch" Kortchmar, I thank them for creating the perfect soundtrack. It's a brooding little number:



**Danny Kortchmar's guitar went from mellow to maniacal.**

dark, oily Farfisa organ, limb-snapping drums and a voice as edgy and dangerous as high winds. No doubt about it—the destruction of Los Angeles demands "Dirty Laundry."

Safely inside the studio Henley, Kootch and the third member of their production team, Grammy Award winning Greg Ladanyi, remix the third single from Henley's *I Can't Stand Still*—"Nobody's Business." Kootch lights a cigarette and shrugs. "Let's see what we got." With his black hair slicked back and dark good looks Kootch should be leasing juke boxes to East side bars instead of playing on them. Henley leans back in his chair stretching. "Hell, I don't think I can tell the difference anymore," he sighs. Kootch looks past Henley at me and smiles, "Check this out."

Ladanyi punches the play button and out snarls the meanest Link Wray in decades, playing something that sounds like the *Bonanza* theme. The song gallops along wildly after it. The motion and humor of Kootch's intro makes you giddy. "Roots," Kootch says, lifting an eyebrow. "The recording team of the 80s!" shouts Ladanyi. "I liked the first take better," laughs Henley.

The merger of Henley and Kortchmar is surprising and inevitable considering the tangled Los Angeles musical tree. Kootch first surfaced when he and Martha's Vineyard buddy James Taylor formed the now legendary Flying Machine in Greenwich Village in 1966. During his fifteen years with Taylor, Kortchmar's soulful, rhythmic and distinctive guitar attracted other artists and Danny contributed to Carole King, Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt—virtually every musician of note in

California. Except Don Henley. For most of the last decade Henley worked within the confines of the Eagles. The two artists drifted past each other for ten years, never really connecting until Henley began assembling musicians for his own album. His guitarist of choice—Danny Kortchmar.

At first glance, these two make less sense as friends than as musical collaborators. If Kootch is the Al Pacino of rock 'n' roll, Texan Henley is the Gary Cooper. Henley, literate and thoughtful, chooses his words carefully; Kootch unleashes emotional explosions. In conversation as well as art they complement each other.

**MUSICIAN:** *As distinguished rock survivors, what do you think about the state of rock 'n' roll these days?*

**HENLEY:** I think music is in a real state of transition right now, like it was in the mid-60s. There's a whole new generation of kids coming up and I think the people who run record companies are either too old or too out of touch to get on the bandwagon quick enough. A lot of music is real shallow right now. People seem to be lost, to be groping for something and there aren't any leaders right now, no Beatles or Elvis Presleys.

Rock is definitely recycling. Look at the Stray Cats; everything is recycled and nothing is really new. I mean, "Dirty Laundry" is just the blues, but we put a lot of technology into it, and put some subject matter into it. That's what I like to do. I had a manager who once said, "There's two kinds of songs: there's beat songs that you can dance to, and there are message songs." And I always thought, "Why can't you have both? Why does it have to be one or the other?"

**MUSICIAN:** *How do you two collaborate?*

**KORTCHMAR:** Well, for "Dirty Laundry," Don had the idea for writing a song about the media and the fascination with the negative and we bandied it about, we talked about it a lot, what we wanted to say. Then I went home one night and came up with this perfect groove on the Farfisa organ, 'cause it's real tense, nervous. I came up with the first verse, I think, and Don already had a bunch of stuff he wanted to say.

**MUSICIAN:** *You seem very comfortable writing with Henley.*

**KORTCHMAR:** Well, Don's always been collaborating with guys and then was taken out of that situation and went through a big fear. With me it's the exact opposite: I never collaborated with anybody, except a little bit with Jackson Browne. Don wanted to start his album, and he had no idea what he was going to do, but he wanted me to play on it. I went up to his house and a couple of other guys like Waddy (Wachtel) were there. We just started rehearsing, and messing around. We went in the studio and cut that track you just heard, "Nobody's Business." And the night after that, I went back to his house and he said, "Listen why don't you produce this album?" It was really a bold move on Don's part because first of all everyone wanted to produce Don, everyone wanted to be involved with Don. He just decided on me.

**HENLEY:** Gut instinct. I knew I needed a good musician 'cause I'm not and I knew I needed a good guitar player. I mostly play piano. I play drums like a songwriter; I don't do anything fancy, just play the beat and try not to get in the way.

**KORTCHMAR:** It's an amazing advantage that Don is a singer/songwriter whose instrument is drums. He doesn't play a harmony instrument like guitar or piano, so he writes purely on melody. It's like a blind guy—his sense of hearing and sense of touch are intensified because of his sightlessness. Good melodies suggest the chord changes. And Henley's capable of doing that.

**MUSICIAN:** *That's the classic R&B way of doing it.*

**HENLEY:** I can remember playing and singing a lot of R&B in Texas. The ending of "Long Way Home" is a Stevie Wonder move, I got that from him. And that's like a real whimsical kind of thing to put in a serious song like that but you know I thought that was a good touch. I've been accused of being too negative in my songwriting. But most of rock 'n' roll is rebellion and negativity. I mean, I was so outraged when I wrote "Dirty Laundry." I was outraged by the way they treated John Belushi

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

after he was dead and the way they treated Natalie Wood. I was just outraged at the news media in general. I guess I don't like the media very much. When I got busted they printed my address in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Herald Examiner*. I wasn't a real close friend of John's but I knew him and I liked him a lot. He was a very kind man, a nice man. Every time we played in Chicago, he and Danny Aykroyd would come to see us and they would hang out; he was a good guy. And I mean the things that the Police Department said about him and said to his wife and stuff really pissed me off.

The song caused a big stir in the news industry. NBC called me up and *Good Morning America* wanted to talk to me about it. But I didn't want to talk about it because it's self-explanatory.

I still don't think of myself as a songwriter. I think it's a big joke, you know; I'm embarrassed about it. You know that song by Paul Simon, "Faking It"? Yeah well that's the way I feel. I think a lot of my friends who are songwriters feel that way.

**MUSICIAN:** *Because it comes easily?*

**HENLEY:** No, because I just don't I'm think an accomplished musician—which has never been a prerequisite for being a great songwriter; in fact most of the good songwriters I know are not very good musicians. I don't know, I just haven't gotten used to the idea. If I didn't have the pressure I probably wouldn't do it at all. Danny Fogelberg and Stevie Nicks write all the time, they write five or six songs a week. And some of them are good and some of them aren't. I don't finish a song if it's not any good. When Kootch played me the music that turned out to be "Lila," it sounded sorta like Van Morrison. I always wanted to write a song about Ireland and about the conflict there and I always wanted to use the Chieftains. It just fit with this thing that I already had in my head.

**KORTCHMAR:** You build up a vocabulary of ideas. I've got bits and pieces and fragments of things, just hundreds, that I'll draw on. If I need a bridge I'll use something that was a whole song and just take part of it and use it as an intro.

**MUSICIAN:** *So you cannibalize your own stuff.*

**HENLEY:** I read a lot. I read every kind of magazine you can

*"I don't want things too meticulous. I like leakage, I like mistakes; I like sloppiness and stuff, because that's okay."*

imagine. You oughta see my house. There's no place to sit.

**KORTCHMAR:** We've got files about different topics that we want to address ourselves to. We've got TV cassettes, we do research. We're serious as a heart attack about making albums. It's a very thin line because you also can't be self-indulgent.

**HENLEY:** The smarmy, maudlin love songs are the easiest! One thing I'm proud of on this album is I have a sense of humor. All the critics always said how serious the Eagles were. We never really took ourselves that seriously at all. We joked about it all the time, but maybe it didn't come through in the music. I think I finally managed to get some humor into my music on this album. It's a very dry humor, it's not your basic knee-slapping fart jokes, but it does come across.

**MUSICIAN:** *How do these new songs compare to early Eagle love songs, like "Wasted Time"?*

**HENLEY:** Well, regarding some of the early Eagle songs, I agree with some of our critics now, that we were young, immature, male chauvinists and some of our songs came out like that. But then you grow up. I don't want to write those kind of songs anymore. Besides, those were a collaborative effort,

**'It's like a blind guy'; Henley's sense of melody is enhanced by his inability to play chordal instruments.**



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

*"It drove Glenn Frey and me completely crazy and gave us gray hairs and ulcers, because everybody wants to be quarterback."*

those weren't necessarily my opinions. Just to get a song written is hard enough. Sometimes you don't quite have time to sit down and reflect on whether you're being objective, or you're being fair or you're right or not—it's just emotion. So it just gushes out, and a lot of the early love songs were based on relationships that we had had, when something didn't work out, or we thought we'd been put down by a girl. But we were angry young men. I remember getting black from women about "Lying Eyes," and I thought that song was pretty well balanced. We didn't blame it on the girl, it wasn't her fault at all. It was everybody's fault. It was the situation. Women gave me a ton of shit about that. I couldn't believe it, cause it was just a song—I mean what about "Under My Thumb"?

**KORTCHMAR:** That's a *revenge* tune. In any case, when you write about relationships the idea is just to get as deep as you can, instead of "I love you, I don't love you, I want you, I don't want you." All you can draw from is your own experiences and if it feels right, you know it's because it tells the story accurately for you.

**MUSICIAN:** *Don, as a member of a supergroup, it must have been hard to have "normal" relationships. Once you're isolated from what you were originally, separated from most people, are you afraid of losing the feeling you write about?*

**HENLEY:** It's a constant struggle to keep in touch with that. I go home a lot, where I was brought up, and try to remember. I can't write fiction very well; I'm one of those guys who has to live the trip, I have to, but you can't do that cause it'll kill you. Eventually, I think I'm a lot more objective now, a lot more reflective, it's not quite as much instant gut emotion as it used to be. Now when I write a love song I think, "Well am I being fair? Am I looking at this from both sides?" You know that's that other line in "Long Way Home,"—"there's three sides to every story..." It's hard to keep in touch but I don't think I've lost touch.

**MUSICIAN:** *Is a relationship, a monogamous relationship, something you want?*

**HENLEY:** Very much so and it's hard here in this city and being in this business, but I've finally grown up, here at thirty-five. I think I've finally got it down. It means something to me; I finally found a girl that I really love but this business makes it so difficult because it's thrown at you all the time. That line in one of James Taylor's songs, "I hear horns, I hear voices, I guess I was born with too many choices." It's a great line.

**KORTCHMAR:** Especially in Los Angeles and this rarefied society, this insane society, you've gotta keep reminding yourself about the eternal verities.

**HENLEY:** If a relationship doesn't work, you say, "well it's the wrong girl," and sometimes it is but you gotta work at it—it's a job, it doesn't just work itself; there are no easy answers. You've gotta criticize yourself, which is where a lot of people fall down because they can't do that. Even in my songwriting I'm very self-critical, to a point where it stifles me, sometimes paralyzes me. Which is not to say that...I mean the Eagles were criticized for making everything too meticulous and making records nice and clean, stuff like that. But if you listen to the songs, the subject matter and the playing weren't meticulous.

People confused our standards and our direction with our production values. It just so happens that we had an engineer and producer that recorded in a certain style and it wasn't slam bam and it wasn't loose and it wasn't sloppy. Now I have a whole different direction that I want to go in. I like leakage, I like mistakes, I like sloppiness and stuff. Because that's okay. I liked it then but couldn't get it because I was part of the band.

**MUSICIAN:** *Did you argue for it?*

**HENLEY:** Sometimes, yeah, but I didn't get it. I was never satisfied with my drum sound. It's amazing. If you've got a great drum sound, you sound like the greatest drummer in the world and if you don't you sound like a lousy drummer. I'm not a great drummer, but I'm adequate. I played what needed to be played. But I got a reputation somehow as not being a very good drummer because—and I don't want to cast any bad light or any aspersions on Bill Szymczyk, because he was very good at what he did—but my drums never quite sounded like I wanted them to sound. The drums on "I Can't Stand Still" and "Them And Us," that's more what I wanted to say.

**KORTCHMAR:** You'd never in a million years guess that was the same drummer that played on the Eagles records.

**HENLEY:** That's why I say people confuse production values with ability somehow.

**MUSICIAN:** *How did the Eagles organize tasks in the studio?*

**HENLEY:** We tried to be a democracy and we weren't because that never really works for very long. Everybody got to say their piece, but ultimately Glenn Frey and I would have the last say.

**KORTCHMAR:** Most of my experience is pretty much the opposite of Don's. I was working for a lot of different people, doing what I call "Leroying." Not to put it down; I know I learned how to play with all these great writers like James Taylor but I'd been playing rock 'n' roll in bands until the early 70s when I started working with James and Carole King. They were playing this really laid-back pop music and I kinda got hung with it, or I always railed against it. Obviously James is not going to go out and sound like AD/DC, but it got to the point where when I started working with Don it was the first time that I'd gotten to do what I really wanted to do.

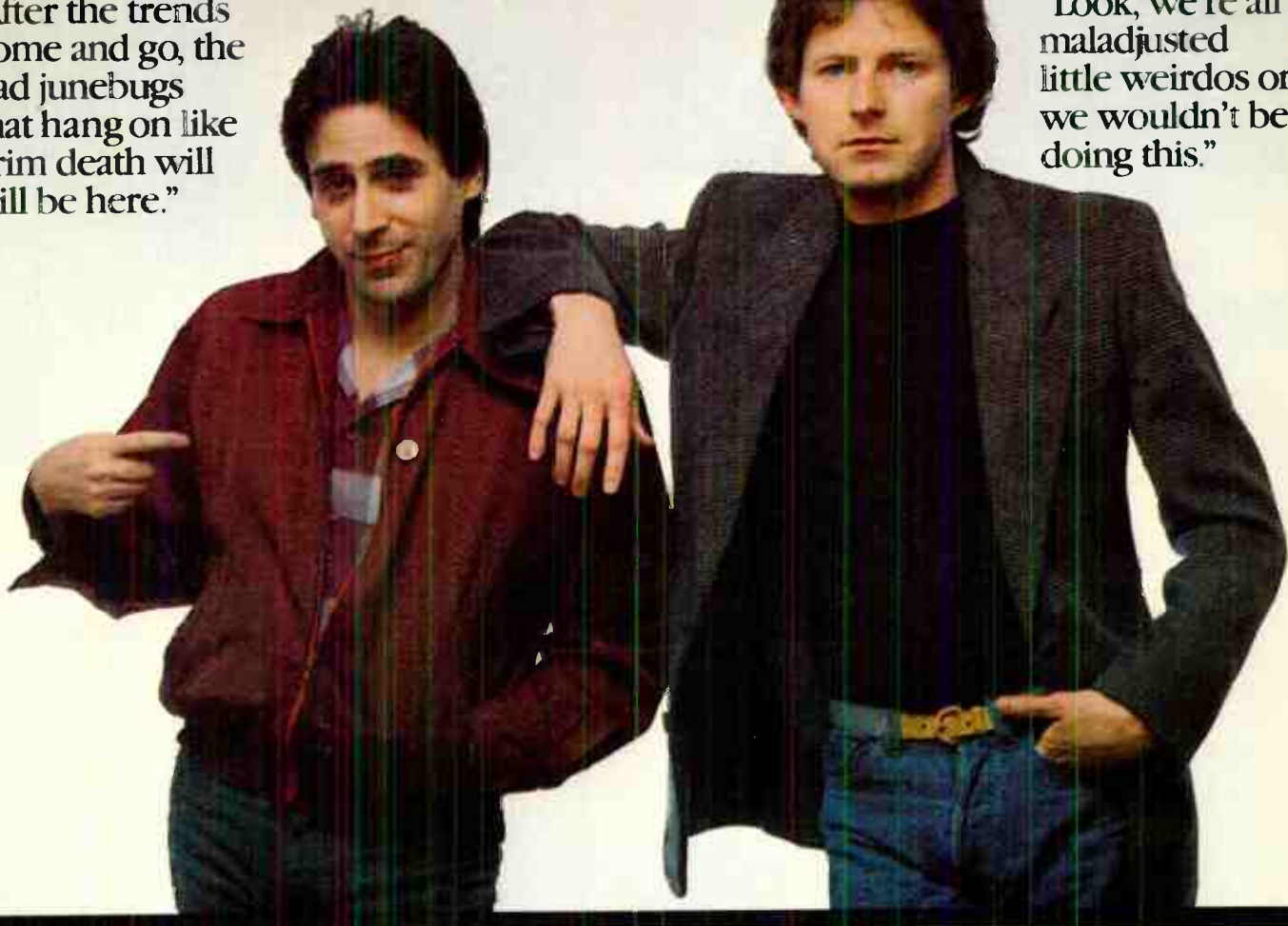
**HENLEY:** And me too! Don't get me wrong, I'm real proud of a lot of the stuff we did in the Eagles, and the way we did it was appropriate for the time. But times have changed now.

We were always accused of being very mellow, but we were a bunch of maniacs. It was simply the style of engineering and miking and stuff that our producer employed and he was excellent. He's a very talented man, Bill, and he's a wonderful guy. He's like sort of a father to all of us—he was a mediator, a psychiatrist, a counselor. And there's a careful quality about him. But then that's why we hired him in the first place, because we went from Glyn Johns to him. Johns' approach was the total opposite—two mikes on the drums and a lot of echo. But it wasn't powerful. Glyn had an image of us as a ballad group; he didn't want us to be rock 'n' roll and he didn't think we could play rock 'n' roll, and he'd engineered the Stones on LPs like *Exile On Main Street*, so who the hell were we to be wanting to play rock 'n' roll? I mean he *told* us we couldn't play rock 'n' roll and to forget it. He was a complete tyrant. I'm still friends with him, but we were really young and green, and he just lorded over us, man. I mean he would give us three chances to do a track or a vocal and if that was the best we could do then that was it. The albums, *Eagles* and *Desperado*, were cheap but good. And he worked with all the heavies so we couldn't argue.

I remember Johns didn't like dope, so we'd have to sneak off to the bathroom to do dope. And in 1973 during one track (on the first, unreleased version of *On The Border*), I said, Glyn can't you make me sound like John Bonham? And he sorta looked down his nose at me and said, "You don't play like John Bonham." I said, "Aw, I know, but turn it up, you know." We'd record and do everything just like *he* wanted it. Glenn was always the first guy to rebel, and so he'd been checking out American producers. He listened to some of Bill Szymczyk's

“After the trends come and go, the bad Junebugs that hang on like grim death will still be here.”

“Look, we’re all maladjusted little weirdos or we wouldn’t be doing this.”



stuff with J. Geils and “Frankenstein” by Edgar Winter and liked the way that stuff sounded. So he said, “I think we should go with this guy Szymczyk.” So we hired him and he was like a soul mate. We got along really well; he’d get just as high and crazy as we were.

**MUSICIAN:** *Kootch, what was your feeling hearing Don and the Eagles’ early stuff?*

**KORTCHMAR:** I’ll tell you exactly what my feeling was. When the Eagles first came out, I thought they were absolutely appalling. I couldn’t stand them. Absolutely terrible. Especially things like “Peaceful Easy Feeling” and “Take It Easy.” ‘Cause what they were saying was exactly the opposite of what I wanted to hear, what was going on in my life. Take Jackson’s “Peaceful Easy Feeling”: here’s this song that says “walking down the road in Tucson, Arizona, seven women on my mind.” (sic) And here I am trying to keep my marriage together, and this guy’s got seven women on his mind! God, it sounded like they were having fun, but I sure wasn’t (laughter).

The first time I really realized how great Don was was after “One Of These Nights.” On that particular tune, it came out. Don is the kind of singer that has intense soul without using any soul licks. He doesn’t go “yeah yeah”. He doesn’t use any of those licks and it still has bite and atmosphere; it sounds like it’s coming from the bayou. If I could sing, I would want to sing exactly like him.

**HENLEY:** One thing that the Eagles did that never really got noticed very much or talked about is pretty heavily into R&B. We were influenced by Al Green. “I Can’t Tell You Why” is straight Al Green, ‘cause Glenn was a big R&B freak. He’s from Detroit and he grew up with all that stuff. When we first started trying to do it on the third album, it was terrible and too white, but we got better at it.

The press judge you by your first work. Our first couple of albums were that *Desperado* country-rock stuff and we got

put into that category, filed in that slot, and no matter what we did after that, we could not break away from that category. We were always that from then on. If we did “Teenage Jail” and “Life In The Fast Lane,” we were still a country-rock band.

**KORTCHMAR:** Same thing happened to me as a session musician. I got typecast from playing with James Taylor in this soft rock California mode. Examine any of those sessions or any of the sessions of our album. In the latter case we’d have an English drummer, a Jamaican percussionist, two Jewboys from New York, a Texan and a guy from Gainesville, Florida. That’s California music?

**HENLEY:** California is just a melting pot for America anyway. It’s just a synthesis and it’s avant-garde, it’s a leader. Whatever happens here usually filters out to the rest of the nation. People make a mistake if they think that *Hotel California* was just about California—it was a metaphor for the rest of the world. That sounds pretty grandiose but that’s what we had in mind when we wrote it. California is in the vanguard, the Fast Lane.

**MUSICIAN:** *That song became a figure of speech.*

**HENLEY:** If I had a nickel for every time I saw “life in the fast lane” in print! Actually, Glenn came up with that line.

**MUSICIAN:** *That must have been a wonderful feeling during Hotel California, really hitting your stride.*

**HENLEY:** Yeah, oh yeah. That’s a great feeling when you get that. We got that on *One Of These Nights* a little bit too. And then sometimes it just goes away completely. Right now, for instance, Kootch and I are supposed to start this next album and I’m not particularly fired up about it because I have all these Pavlovian negative residual feelings about how hard it is. I mean it’s not easy for me to write songs, ‘cause I really have to stir up my insides. I have to work myself up into a state of frenzy and madness.

**MUSICIAN:** *Don, how did you feel when you knew the Eagles were drifting apart?*

HOWARD ROSENBERG

*“We just got tired. Due to fatigue, craziness and nervousness, some verbal exchanges went down that didn’t heal.”*

**HENLEY:** Well... you feel it happening but you don't want to destroy what you've got. The last album, *The Long Run*, was just miserable. I mean, we weren't ready to do it, we weren't inspired. We weren't getting along too well. And still there were managers and the record company and they had all these dollar signs in their eyes, saying, "Give it to us! You can do it!" The fact is, we peaked with *Hotel California*. That was our finest hour, and although *The Long Run* had some interesting moments on it, it wasn't as good.

**MUSICIAN:** *Is that something you were aware of?*

**HENLEY:** Sure I was aware of it. It was the best we could do at the time and it was all we could do to do that. It was a good thing we broke up, in retrospect, because we'd always said, "We want to step off this wave at the crest, we don't want to crash into the beach, and try to get back up." So it was exactly the right thing to do, profits be damned. I don't know how we stayed together as long as we did. I mean, you have to subordinate your ego to the songs; the song is the most important thing and if the albums aren't good, then we all lose. It drove Glenn and me completely crazy and gave us grey hairs and ulcers, because everybody wants to be quarterback, everybody wants to be the guy who sings and writes the songs. The quarterback is the guy who gets all the glory and the credit and the girls. And the guys who block are the unsung heroes. But we all managed to do it for ten years, before this "Eagle" thing started to get in the way.

Kootch is a lot like what Glenn was, in a way. Glenn never thought of himself as a great lead player, he was sort of intimidated by Joe Walsh and Don Felder, even though he hired them. But Glenn was like the glue, he was like what Keith Richards is to the Rolling Stones; he was a great rhythm player; he understood the importance of Chuck Berry and of great rhythm guitar. He understood how to play in his place and stay in his place and make everybody else look good, not have to step out in the spotlight and take a solo and be a virtuoso. And Danny is that way, too. He plays all the great rhythm parts and arranges all the stuff, and can play lead when he wants to. Danny's a little more avant-garde and crazy and more modern than Glenn, but they're both walking encyclopedias of the history of rock 'n' roll. You can name a song title and he or Glenn could tell you who did it, what label it was on, what year it came out. It's such a new art form anyway—if you want to call it art.

**MUSICIAN:** *How did the final decision to not continue with the Eagles happen?*

**HENLEY:** This was something that had been building up for a long time. I think it started right after *Hotel California*. That's when Glenn and I started growing in opposite directions.

**MUSICIAN:** *Up to that point you had been friends.*

**HENLEY:** We were like brothers; we lived together. And then we had sown all our wild oats and we each wanted a steady girlfriend. There would be times when he would have a girlfriend and I wouldn't. Or I'd have a girlfriend and he wouldn't, and it just sort of separated us. You get so close that you can't stand each other sometimes, you know each other so well. And I wanted to write all about all these social issues and he

didn't necessarily and we just grew apart musically and philosophically. A lot of things happened during *The Long Run*.

**MUSICIAN:** *To force it in a way?*

**HENLEY:** Yes. Glenn and Felder were at odds. Glenn just got tired of being the boss and being hated for it. With the king's life comes the king's work. If you're a leader, people are going to respect you and follow you, but they're going to hate you at the same time. So that just got to be too much.

We just got tired. It's as simple as that—we just got tired. We ran out of inspiration, and to follow *Hotel California* was such a monumental task that it just scared us. Glenn felt like he was a great coach who put this team together and then didn't get to express himself enough. Due to fatigue and craziness and nervousness, some verbal exchanges went down during the making of *The Long Run* that didn't heal. We used to get in a room and just fight it out and talk it out, but it got to the point after awhile that we stopped communicating—and that's death.

Glenn called up one day and told me that he wanted to go and do some recording on his own. It was a casual conversation that started out being about football and then he interjected that he wanted to go do something on his own. He didn't necessarily mean by that that he wanted to break the group up but it pissed me off so bad, because I always thought in my mind that when the group broke up, we'd all get in the room together and get good and drunk and sort of cry on each other's shoulder and say, "Well it was great and I love you and we're gonna just quit now." He didn't mean to do it that abrupt way but it was too painful for him to do it any other way. He just sorta had to whip it out like that. I understand it now, but at the time it pissed me off. I just said to myself, "Well if he's going to make an album, I'm going to make an album, too!" So that's what happened. It'd been festering since 1977, it had been growing and building up. We watched all these other bands break up and we learned and we watched and we said, "We're not going to do that, we're going to avoid all these pitfalls and mistakes and stuff." But we had nine and a half, ten good years, so that's all you can ask for. In retrospect, he was right. It was time to stop because that last album was just so agonizing and uninspired, it was just miserable. We couldn't have gone on like that at all. I still love Glenn and I know that he still loves me and stuff.

**MUSICIAN:** *Kootch, I guess you understand that feeling, after you left James Taylor around 1978.*

**KORTCHMAR:** Boy, with James I *had* to leave, *had* to stop playing with him, and it was a real scary thing to do because it wasn't like I was inundated with work. But I absolutely *had* to stop recording and gigging with James, because I felt I *had* to play true rock 'n' roll for a change, and at this point I was like thirty-one or thirty-two years old. I felt, "Man, if I just keep going on in this direction, I'm going to get stuck here for life." And also, I was pushing James to do more rock 'n' roll with songs like "Honey, Don't Leave L.A.," and that was wrong, 'cause James is just not a rock 'n' roller. James shouldn't change; what he's doing works and it's what people expect of him. But with me, it was a situation of grow *now* or don't grow at all.

It was a situation that could have gotten ugly because I felt that way so strongly that I wouldn't have become a positive force; I would have been a thorn in everybody's side. Leaving James was not a courageous or bold thing to do—it was simply an utter necessity.

Playing with James on all those albums—*Mudslide Slim*, *One Man Dog*, *Gorilla*, *In The Pocket*, *Flag, JT*—whew, it got to

Danny Kortchmar's most-used guitar is a Fender Stratocaster with Schecter pickups ("It's the only one equipped with a vibrato bar—if God and Leo Fender invented it, I gotta use it"). He also favors a '52 Tele, a '55 gold-top Les Paul and a Gretsch 6120 ("It's got a fabulous tone"). He uses a Yamaha pedalboard. "I had it buffed to get the power up; the individual Yamaha modules are great, but together, the noise builds up." In the studio, he close mikes a Music Man or a Marshall amp. Don Henley plays Tama drums.



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be like walking on eggshells a lot of the time, because James' music has a lot of harmonic movement to it, a lot of delicate dynamics. My arpeggio approach with him was worked nicely into the framework we'd set up, but I'd be sitting there with my Telecaster, Stratocaster or Les Paul, getting more and more frustrated. Playing both with Carole King and with James taught me an awful lot about playing solo, but it became harder to exercise those skills I was acquiring. With James, most of the gigs were such that I couldn't ever open my amp up enough to get a little guitar ambience going. Part of the thing with rock guitar is that when you open an amplifier up, overtones come out; simple power chords, when played with volume, take up space in interesting ways; little things explode into big things. But I never got to pursue that stuff.

Moreover, in our later years it would be two or two-and-a-half years between albums, with a certain amount of touring in between. Artistically, there wasn't enough stimulation there for me. You have to be careful about the resentment that can creep up. Happily, James and I were able to work it out.

**MUSICIAN:** *Don, it must have been really liberating, really exciting to go off on your own....*

**HENLEY:** I was petrified when the group broke up. I suppose I didn't think I could find anybody else. I thought Jesus Christ, who am I gonna write with now?! It's really difficult to try to find somebody to bury your soul with and somebody who can take a title or a concept like "Dirty Laundry" and could go home and give me a format or a vehicle or a pallet to paint with. And Kootch is real good at it. He just came up with the right colors. It's really refreshing to write with him, it opened me up. I'm growing. He doesn't always just present me with the track and then I put words on it. Sometimes I have a little piece of music, sometimes he has a melody idea.

The hardest thing for me about having a solo career is that previously I was immersed in the group image and it was safe and I was back behind the drums. Now it's a little bit scary

because I don't want to be recognized. I'm going to have to get in front of an audience, and as far as having my picture plastered all over the place and doing hundreds of interviews and being on talk shows and on the covers of magazines, I don't look forward to that prospect.

**MUSICIAN:** *Are you going to take this act on the road?*

**HENLEY:** We're going to go on the road, but I want to be damned sure; I want to have two albums out so I can have good repertoire and people know who I am.

**MUSICIAN:** *How is the second album shaping up?*

**HENLEY:** We've got some ideas. Personally I'd like to write that positive love song. Kind of a tribute to my old lady. There are also things I want to say about America. I know it'll be compared to *Nylon Curtain* and *Nebraska* but there's so much those albums didn't cover: The land, small farmers and what the government is doing to those people.

**KORTCHMAR:** We also want to write a tune called "Up Jumps The Devil."

**HENLEY:** Yeah. I've got a hard-on for Jerry Falwell and those preachers. I just finished a book called *God's Bullies* about those guys. I grew up a Southern Baptist and I know what it is to be scared into religion... all that hellfire and damnation.

**KORTCHMAR:** We also want to do a reggae version of "Sit Down You're Rockin' The Boat," that song from *Guys And Dolls*. Listen, there's a lot left to be written.

**MUSICIAN:** *For rock 'n' roll veterans you guys seem optimistic, really excited about the future.*

**KORTCHMAR:** Definitely. We're just gonna keep comin'. After the trends come and go and come again, the bad june-bugs that hang on like grim death will still be here.

**HENLEY:** (laughing) Look, we're all maladjusted little weirdos or we wouldn't be doing this. You know, sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and think, "Why are you doing this? Why don't you just plant a garden or something? I mean, is this important?" But it is important. To me. I've gotta get it out. ☐

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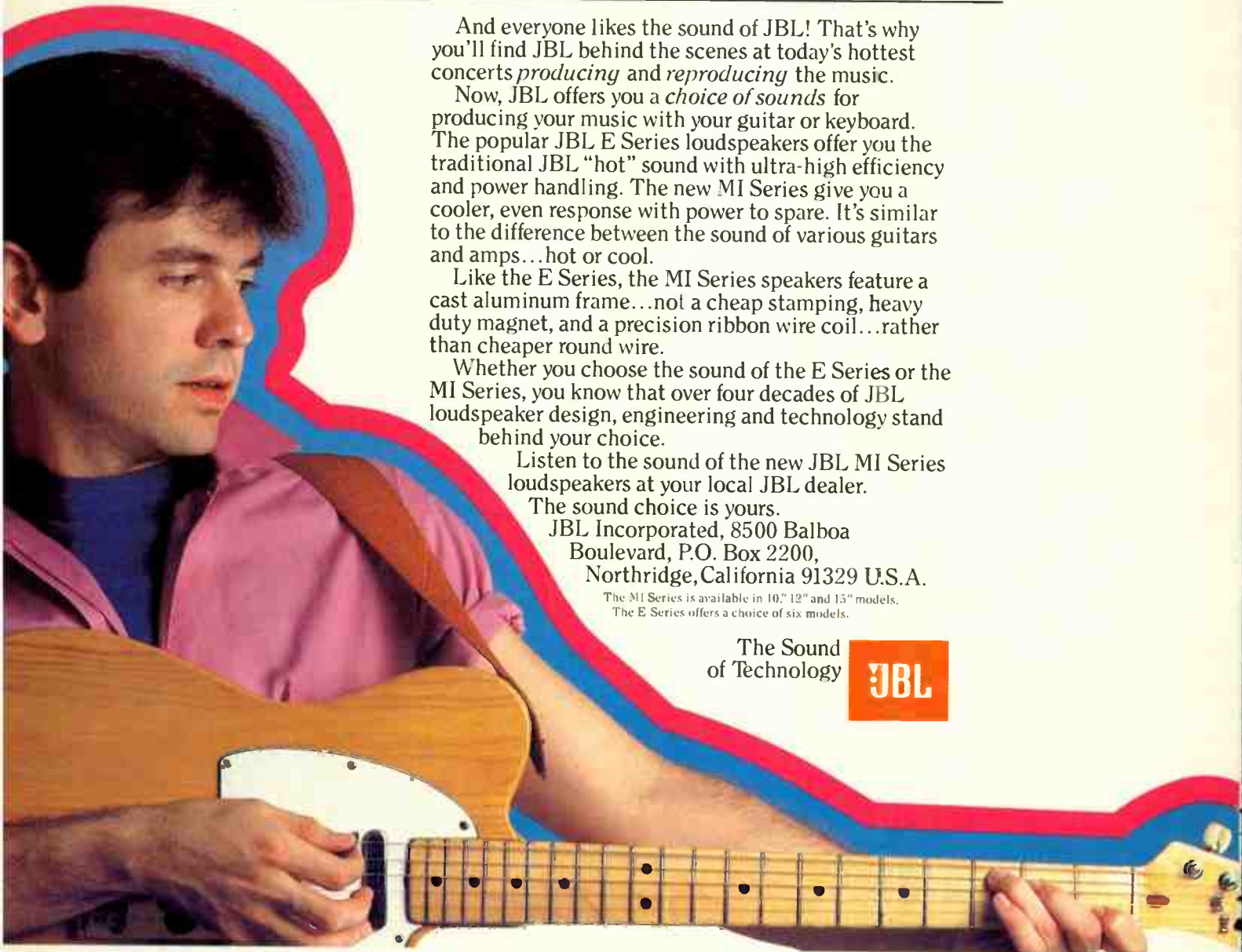
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### 82 BILL FRISELL

An exciting new jazz-fusion guitarist on ECM, Frisell squeezes his thick, toothpaste notes through cracks in time, mixing rave-up rockisms with jazz intelligence.



P R O D U C I N G

### 84 JOE BOYD

Production catalyst of the British folk-rock revolution, Hannibal Records' head Joe Boyd has worked with Fairport, Floyd, Clapton, Martyn and more.



D E V E L O P M E N T S

### 86 TOM DOYLE

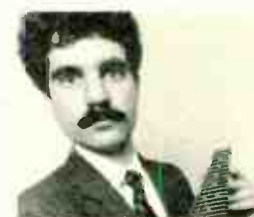
The clarity and quality of the low impedance pickup is given a shot of raunch and some fine tuning, resulting in a versatile, invaluable replacement system.



D E V E L O P M E N T S

### 94 NED STEINBERGER

The inventor designer of the innovative Steinberger bass now rolls out his latest project: a solid-body, reverse-tuning, reinforced plastic guitar.



# Ultravox

*The Technological and the Timeless*



ADRIAN BOOT/RETNA

The completed Ultravox: Billy Currie, Chris Cross (no, not *that* one), Warren Cann and Midge Ure.

## BY FREFF

They're a very, very, unusual band. They've got everything and nothing in common as people, massive success all over the world and virtually none in the United States, eighteen different outside projects apiece—this is only a slight exaggeration—and a musical style made of equal parts 21st century technophilia and 19th century romanticism. Their stage show is elaborately theatrical and bombastic, yet also elegant and effective. And their equipment list could stretch from here all the way to next issue.

They go by the name Ultravox and there are four of them—founding members Warren Cann, Chris Cross and Billy Currie, plus Midge Ure (pronounced

"your") who completed, not just joined, the band in 1979. Before that, Ultravox was one of Britain's brightest but most ridiculously overhyped hopes. With the release of their Eno-produced *Ultravox!* debut album in 1976, they burst forth on to that country's explosive punk scene with a prototype fusion of raw rock emotion and electronic atmosphere. After two more intriguing but overlooked LPs produced by Steve Lillywhite and German studio magician Conny Plank, Ultravox fell on hard times, losing in quick succession two guitarists, lead singer John Foxx, their management and their record label.

At the same time, Midge Ure had come out of Scotland and a succession of bands to join ill-fated punk supergroup the Rich Kids, which blew apart almost immediately. "It was the worst

possible financial combination anyone could want to put together," reflects Midge of his union with Ultravox, speaking in a heavy Glaswegian accent, not a hint of which shows up in his singing. "Between us, we must have owed record companies a quarter million pounds. And they were after it, too." Not an obvious combination, "but technically," smiles Chris Cross, "it was great."

The connection between them was a studio collective known as Visage, the seed crystal of the entire British New Romantic movement. Ure had been a member, along with Ultravox's violinist and keyboardist, Billy Currie. (Originally intended to do no more than make nice, light dance records to be played in the new clubs that were opening, Visage burned itself out in a frenzy of record company hype, clothing bills, and odd-

ball publicity stunts. Remember when Visage's singer, Steve Strange, arrived at his first New York club appearance riding a camel? Midge Ure on going over the hump: "To me it was sick. I actually left the band at that point. I said, 'If he gets on that camel, that's it, I've got nothing else to do with it.' And he got on the camel. And I left.")

The new Ultravox clicked right away. Needing something to go out and play, the four of them wrote three-quarters of what was to become their first album together, *Vienna*, in only a week. It was a distillation of styles, a kind of watermark. For the first time in Ultravox's music, everybody seemed to agree on what was being done and why. Unabashedly romantic and spacey, but unusually anchored to a dance beat by Warren Cann's drumming and thoroughly-rebuilt drum machines, the versions finally recorded in Conny Plank's West German studio were a hit all over the world... except here. Their second album with Plank, *Rage In Eden*, did much the same. It's only with their third album, *Quartet*, produced by the very unlikely George Martin, that they have started to make a real dent in the American marketplace.

Oddly enough, that's the album I like least. I think it points up one potential danger of their success. *Vienna* was written in a blur and recorded in three weeks. *Rage In Eden* took three whole months—"In Germany," adds Chris, "which is like six anywhere else"—but it was written as it was recorded, with the band exploring the possibilities of Conny Plank's studios and their new equipment. With *Quartet*, they wanted to do something different. "We weren't stale, and Conny wasn't stale, but the combination was. We were going into the studio knowing what it would sound like when we came out," explains Midge. So they searched for a new producer, and settled on George Martin as being the most off-the-wall choice they could make. Muting the fascination they share with Plank, pure sound, in favor of that which they share with Martin, technical precision, got them the harder, clearer sound they wanted... but at a price. Billy Currie says "there's more taste in *Quartet*. Particularly if you play it loud. There's not much taste in *Rage In Eden* if you play it loud—you can almost hear the squeak of the bass drum pedal."

But taste isn't necessarily what this time-binding music is all about. The songs for *Quartet* were written during weeks of work in a rehearsal studio in England, and not recorded until after they were roughed into shape. The band was home and happy during the whole process, and as a result, the dark emotions that helped create the earlier album's reverse/perverse light just don't come through well. *Quartet*, the album, might have been made by an Ultravox imitator rather than the band itself.

*Quartet*, the concert experience, is quite another matter. The same songs that rehearsal had dulled were stripped clean and knocked off fresh, coming from the band's collective heart instead of its collective head. And therein lies the danger. All four members write the music. They must be together to make it happen. And nowadays, that means at a scheduled time dragged free from a busy workload, in a rehearsal room packed with all their gear. Can they manage to do it that way and still make records that sound, as the first two do, like glorious gambles?

Of course, when they first made the contact with Martin, it was the element of new risk they were looking for. "Within the first five minutes, he was trying to suss us out to see what we knew about recording, and we were trying to suss him out to see if he had kept up with what's happening," says Midge, "be-



Chris, Midge and Billy man the front line.

cause there was no point in working with him if he had stopped being creative when he finished with the Beatles." He hadn't. "George had a LinnDrum at home. He'd bought it just to learn how to program it and find out what it could do. And, he'd worked out all these amazing calculations, like the snare drum being forty milliseconds behind the beat, and such." (Contrast that with Conny Plank, who would draw strange graphs and wavy lines to convey how he thought a song's mood and shape should change.)

They'd come a long way from *Vienna*, when their mainstay was a Yamaha CS80 and a thoroughly unprogrammable Roland drum machine that Warren had tinkered with ("If I held down more than one button," he says now, "I could almost get an interesting rhythm. I spent

all my time trying to outthink the damn thing"). *Quartet* was recorded on a 48-track using a master tape and carefully coordinated slave mixes to reduce tape wear. For keyboards there was virtually one of everything, from Billy's old ARP Odyssey, which he treasures, to PPGs and Emulators and GS1s; for the special sounds he wanted on the latter, he traveled to the Yamaha factory in Hamburg and programmed them himself.

Certainly, in terms of recording technique, creativity ran rampant. The impossibly correct slap-bass part in "Cut And Run" was actually a bass sampled onto an Emulator, triggered by a LinnDrum ("We'd borrowed it—it was one of only three in England, y'see" sighs Midge, "but then we had a boffin rewire it so we could do triggering and they made us buy it"). The same LinnDrum actually suffered a "meltdown" on the mixing board, after having been on continuously for days. You can hear it speeding up out of place in the middle of "We Came To Dance." And the mix was a monster, an "octopus mix," in Midge's estimation.

"We did that in Montserrat, on the biggest Neve desk I've ever seen in my life. But there wasn't any computer assist which for forty-eight tracks was crazy. George and Geoff Emerick, his engineer, and me and Warren and Billy would all take groups of faders, and sometimes this hand would shoot in front of you to turn something up or punch it out..."

"And afterwards," adds Chris, "there'd be these discussions: 'I think I got my bit right. Did you get yours?'"

You talk to them, you listen to their music, you watch their stage show, and the dichotomy is plain: the technological and the timeless. What they seem to have in common aren't accents or backgrounds or non-musical interests, but a certain way of standing with both feet firmly planted in different worlds. Warren grew up wanting to be a mad scientist or an artist, and along the way he has become both. Billy got Steve Howe to play acoustic guitar for his most recent solo sessions, came to the early "punk" days of Ultravox from a background that included acceptance at the Royal Academy of Music, and yet talks happily of a Fender violin he once played to the edge of sonic destruction. ("You could take the tops of people's heads off with it. Really loud. And great fun, though not exactly pleasant.") Chris and Midge get all excited about the latest advances in computer-based instruments, going on about "new toys," and yet you notice they're wearing old-fashioned, non-digital watches: Chris because it was the cheapest one in the shop, and Midge because his was just the opposite.

That's probably the answer. They don't seem like different worlds to these guys. Not when you're searching for quality.

For example. Midge is building a home studio in a "shed out in the garden," and what he's putting in is a 24-track Harrison mixing board that's fully compatible for all TV and film-synch needs. Warren's doing an album with synthesist Hans Zimmer, and to promote it he did a one-off set of concerts at a planetarium, complete with a specially-commissioned laser show, in which he and Hans played live against five Fairlight CMIs all inter-linked with a 24-track desk. When the lot of them did the video based on "Reap The Wild Wind," they built their 40-foot stage set on the edge of a cliff and blasted it with enough light and smoke to make it visible in France...alone and together, they're doing their best to embody the idea behind another song off *Quartet*, called "Hymn."

Midge explains, "People tend to take that song at face value. It's a bit religious sounding, but it's not really religious at all. You get it rammed into you that everything you ever wanted, you'll get, if you wait long enough. And what we're saying in the song is, 'Well, give it to us now that we're young enough to enjoy it!'"

And what they want to enjoy, right now, is success in America. But they're willing to take the long view, and to work hard for it. That's why they're investing money earned elsewhere in the world to bring a well-disguised arsenal of high tech to American halls. On this tour, the stops are out.

The set is four stories high, and operates on four levels. It looks like the construction on the front of the *Quartet* album: sort of deco, sort of Greek...you could play Shakespeare in it without making a single drama critic cringe. It's also painted a uniform matte grey, as is every single pedalboard, keyboard, violin, bass, guitar and monitor on stage—except for a single precious black Strat Midge couldn't bear to do that to—so that the lighting system, one of the most sophisticated and *theatrical* ever put on the road, would be in total control of the ambience at all times. Providing the sound is a Meyers P.A. that is amazingly clear and powerful for its size.

A hidden cornucopia of instruments provides the musical power. Chris alternates between playing synth-bass left-handed ("Every now and then Billy will look over at my fingering and cringe"), and strapping on a Fender, strung with Rotosounds. His keyboards are a PPG Wave 2.2 and a Minimoog, both altered to accept triggering inputs from "The Iron Lung"—Warren's immense Linn-Drum-and-electronics stack. For effects he's using a MXR doubler, an echo unit and some cheap phasers and chorus boxes. "The cheaper they are, the better they sound. The Small Stone phaser is as cheap as they come, and it only lasts about a week, but it sounds *great*." His bass goes through a Yamaha pre-amp into a Martin 2×15 cabinet.

Midge has a PPG, too (so does Billy; when one person in Ultravox has an instrument, odds are everybody has it, somewhere), though he decries his ability to play it. "I'm not a keyboard player. I'm a synth player. Put me in front of a piano and I'm hopeless. Can't even make both hands work at the same time." His guitars are usually Strats, strung with Picato Lights which he is forever breaking. He routes his signal through a Yamaha effects pedalboard, modified only to the extent of replacing the original overdrive unit with a Roland, and sends it to an old Vox 2×12 cabinet with a 40-watt amp. It's his absolute favorite. "One of the first transistorized amps they ever built. Every now and then it falls apart and I just stick it back together and it still sounds great, totally over the top. If it ever goes for good I'm doomed...can't find another for love



Midge Ure ponders the dimensions of style.

or money."

Chris alternates between standing stock still at his keyboards and moving like a fighter behind his bass. Midge is always stylish, always moving with an actor's flair. Billy Currie—and they all admit it—is "something totally else," a holdover from his days doing shamanistic rites with the Ritual Theatre, no doubt. While playing the keyboards, he jogs, stretches, does one-legged deep knee-bends, and snarls, all in no apparent time-relationship whatsoever to the music he's performing. But let him take hold of his violin and there's a transformation. He gets positively eerie, his eyes all misted and far away, his head cocked as though he's listening to the advice of a well-meaning but thoroughly decadent leprechaun. The violin is a Barcus-Berry that he plays through an MXR pitch transposer (with presets of a minor third, a fifth, ever-so-slightly detuned, and an octave up), Yamaha chorus and flanger, Roland space echo, and finally a Yamaha compressor to equalize the instrument and make up for the slight

weakness of its E-string. His keyboards are mostly Yamahas—a string machine, a CS80 and CP70, a GS1—the aforementioned PPG and his old classic ARP, the first synth he ever owned and the one he'll never give up.

Take a deep breath; the real concentration of high-tech in this electro-junkie band is on the part of the set that passes for a drum riser. From Warren's perch he plays not only his normal set of Yamaha 9000 drums, a batch of Simmons electronic drums, a Simmons SDS-3 module, and two Synares he only uses during "Vienna," but also a stack of rack-mounted gear that's virtually an entire recording studio! (Minus tape machines.) Arranged for his seated convenience, the rack holds two Yamaha power amps, three MXR noise gates, two Roland DC-30 analog echo units ("On some of my things I want a long series of echoes, and digital delays distort that to a totally different sound"), two Simmons Claptraps, a Yamaha E-1010 echo, a Linn LM-1 drum machine, an MXR 100 phaser, two Simmons SDS-5 modules, an Electro-Harmonix Hot Tubes, a LinnDrum, a sequencer that allows the LinnDrum to program the SDS-5s, an AKG reverb, a 35-pin patch bay ("It's been looking like the back of a telephone exchange for far too long") and, last but not least, a Soundcraft 16-channel mixer.

Warren's monitors are bruisers, too: two Yamaha P.A. columns and a couple of standard, if somewhat large, sidefill cabinets. "There's no excitement in hitting a drum, electronic or otherwise, and getting a little tiny boom instead of a BOOM. I'm a very physical player, no matter how much electronics I use, and I need that kind of volume to get into it." What this man says, you can definitely believe; his manner is as intense as his playing, and his voice pitched so low the band jokes that "it takes a harmonizer to bring Warren up into audible range."

That's the lot, the people and the gear. But it leaves out nearly as much as it tells. It doesn't really cover the videos that Chris and Midge are producing for both their band and others, and the plans they have for making a feature film about the Glasgow gangs of the 20s (the ones that gave Midge's hometown such a horrible reputation). It skips over Warren's somewhat Utopian studio/electronics research and design center, the one he's building with Hans Zimmer and film composer Stanley Meyers, and the fact that he just played on a *Drifters* single, for heaven's sake.

But you can't avoid one point. There's Style and there's style. One has depth and the other doesn't, and they're eternally getting confused in fashion and hype and last week's headlines. One will take you someplace new, and good, and the other will just take you.

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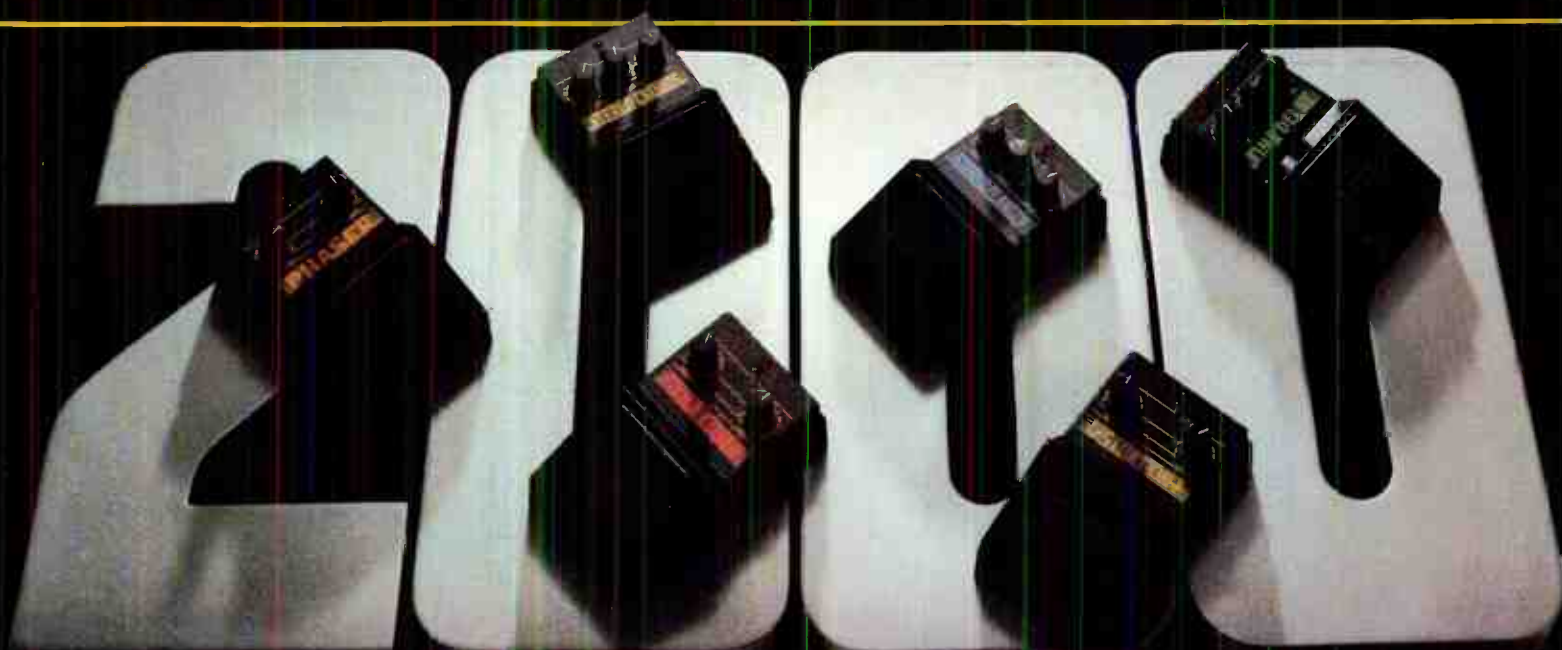
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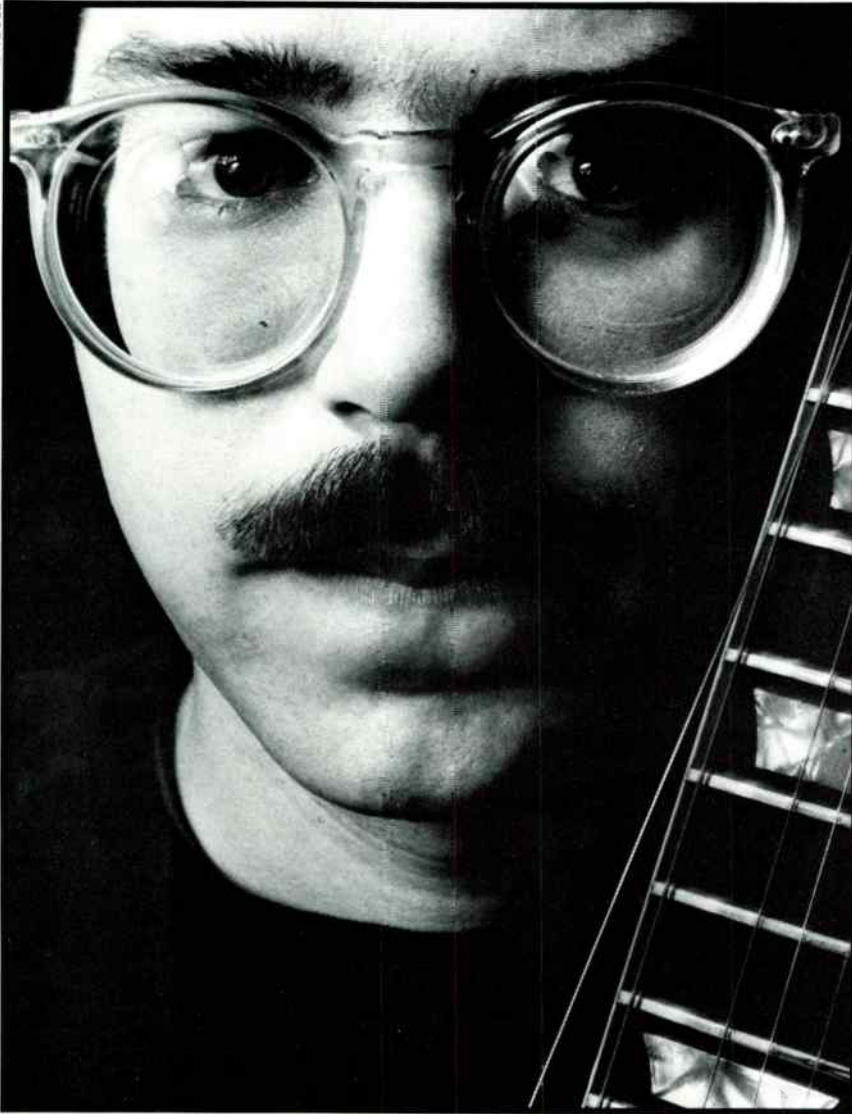
World Radio History

# BILL FRISELL'S TOOTHPASTE GUITAR

Oozing Through Cracks in Time

BY CHIP STERN

DEB FEINGOLD



Frisell disguises his guitar's attack, giving it a swelling, painterly obliqueness.

**B**ill Frisell's electric guitar style is modern in the best sense of that word, straddling the electronic ambience and distortion of contemporary rock and the nuances of touch and harmonic sophistication usually associated with jazz. The first time I heard Frisell negotiating the furious rhythmic terrain of his regular band Stone Tiger (with the bass innovations of Percy Jones and drummer Mike Clark's unique synthesis of bebop and funk), he sounded for all the world like Jim Hall paraphrasing Eric

Clapton. At times it seemed like Clark was trying to sucker him into some grooving. But even though Frisell swung, he'd have none of it.

He was looking for the *cracks in time*, a place where he could ooze between the 1-2-3-4; maybe lock in for, oh 2½ bars, then cut loose, suspend the time and harmony and go skydiving, looking for some new space; retreat into his innocence and disappear, then swell up like an amphetamine Andy Summers, blipping and bleeping away. His guitar

sound comes squeezing out like toothpaste instead of buzzing and yelling like a chainsaw massacre. One can easily imagine why the Ingmar Bergman of jazz, Manfred Eicher (who produced Frisell's dreamy new ECM solo debut, *In Line*), must love the lad. Were we but privy to the recording session, we might hear Manfred enthuse: "Jah, jah, ist goot Bill, ist goot. Vait a sec vwhile ve svitch in ze fjord echo, zen you play some more of zat toothpaste guitar."

The heart of Bill Frisell's sound is his use of a D'Armand volume pedal and a Yamaha Model E1005 analog delay to disguise the attack of the guitar, allow a breathier sense of time and give his lines a more rubbery, elongated kind of flow. It's as if his notes were inhaled rather than picked, and on a tune like "Mandeville" from Paul Motian's ground-breaking quintet date *Psalms* (ECM), Frisell improvises off the actual resonance of the delay. By playing with the unit's hang-time and squeezing out the chords a hair behind-the-beat, Frisell approximates the swelling, vocalized quality of a pedal-steel in an understated, Byrds-like performance.

"That's the influence of Jerry Hahn and Steve Swallow from that old Gary Burton RCA album *Country Roads*. I played that record to death—the way Hahn phrased was so supple and lyrical. I just love the synthesis they got of country and jazz—it's an appealing sound." On his own album, Frisell often uses the Yamaha delay as a silent partner, or a second pair of hands, as the aptly-titled "Two Arms" demonstrates. The rich sustaining quality of the delay lets him arpeggiate chords in the bass and superimpose broken lines and inversions on top in the manner of a keyboardist for a misty, contrapuntal effect. On "Shorts" he uses this gong-like sustain for Aloha-hoi figurations, and on "Start" he interpolates the melody from "Norwegian Wood" in a witty, bowed manner.

"The modulation section of the Yamaha is also unique," he adds, "because it creates this time loop, where it gives you the note and a slapback, but at another pitch, and I never know if it'll be up or down. That creates an element of uncertainty I like to improvise with." On "White Magic" with Motian he combines this effect with arching distortion (an old MXR) for looping, somersaulting violin cadenzas and garbled belches of fuzz chords (Pat Metheny meets Carlos Santana), double-clutching Motian's cracking rock pow-wow. "Paul and I share a sense of adventure," Frisell says reverently of this drum innovator. "He encourages me to jump off cliffs and go berserk with the rhythm without feeling like a fool. Drummers like Paul, Bobby Moses, D. Sharpe and Mike Clark really



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bring me out, and even though I love intimate things like *In Line*, it's just never the same."

The reason Frisell doesn't sound the same as thousands of other calisthenic guitarists trapped in the clone syndrome is the way his phrasing breathes. As it turns out, this Baltimore native got his grounding in music and theory on a reed: "I took clarinet from the fourth grade through my second year in college because my father thought it was a nice instrument," Frisell says in his gentle, bemused manner, "and I hated it. I could push all the right buttons, and it came out right and everybody thought it was great, but it didn't mean anything at all. Recently I've found myself interpolating this Debussy piece into my solos, and I'm sure that the clarinet's sound influences my tone on guitar."

His guitar studies started with pop music he heard on the radio, playing along on a Fender Mustang through a little deluxe amp he bought with money from a paper route. Then came Chicago blues—Otis Rush, B.B. King, Buddy Guy and Paul Butterfield as well as James Brown. In Denver, where he grew up, the thirty-two year old Frisell played in groups backing up vocal acts covering R&B hits by Little Anthony & the Imperials and the Temptations before discovering Hendrix and Cream ("I copied Clapton's solo on 'Crossroads' at the time").

Then, through the influence of a guitar teacher named Dale Bruning and a Wes Montgomery organ trio record he found for eighty-nine cents in Woolworth's, he entered what he ruefully calls his "jazz purist period," later studying with both Johnny Smith and Jim Hall. Bruning, Frisell says admiringly, "was an oasis, a connection to this other world of music." Jim Hall imparted his sense of timbre, economy and wit.

"He'd make me play these Bach pieces, which implied a lot of harmonies, and showed me how to breathe on the guitar and understand the arc of the phrase. And he'd have me practice all these two- and three-note chords, harmonized triads and weird intervals in the diatonic scale, so anything I could think of melodically, I could translate into harmonic patterns and cycles. Also, I loved the way he accompanied, not playing whole chords, but fragments like Andy Summers plays today. To this day, I'm very conscious of that. There's no reason to think in such restrictive blocks of activity."

While finishing studies at the Berklee School of Music in the late 70s another teacher, John Damion, got Frisell thinking in terms of pure sound, what Frisell describes as "a real painterly, oblique, non-clichéd way of thinking. He taught me to get musical ideas from anything, *continued on page 88*

# UNCOMMON SENSE: JOE BOYD

Reflections of an Intuitive Producer

BY DAVID FRICKE



"Don't screw it up"; from Clapton to Floyd to Fairport, Boyd keeps things going right.

It's a story that could only happen in the wide-open, free-swinging 60s. A young Harvard graduate (English literature, 1964) from Princeton, New Jersey plugs into the thriving New England folk scene as an independent record distributor and concert promoter. After getting drunk at a party and telling Elektra head Jac Holtzman what he thought of the label's U.K. operation, Holtzman sends him over to the real England to run that operation. In London, the grad nearly signs Cream, records early Pink Floyd and Soft Machine sessions and soon goes on to manage and produce brilliant, often eccentric talents like Fairport Convention, Richard Thompson, the Incredible String Band, John Martyn and Nick Drake for his own Witchseason Productions, orchestrating Britain's late 60s-early 70s folk-rock revolution in the process.

Now forty-one and head of his own independent Hannibal label, Joe Boyd admits with a winning smile that lights up his still-boyish good looks that one of his greatest talents was simply being in the right place at the right time. Most of that time was spent in a London studio called Sound Techniques where, with his steady engineer John Wood, Boyd used his own enthusiasm for pop extremes and a refined production intuition to draw out of his artists an unbroken string of remarkable performances—among them Fairport's *Liege And Lief*, Pink Floyd's 1967 debut "Arnold Layne," John and Beverly Martyn's *The Road To Ruin*, Nick Drake's *Bryter Layter* and most recently Richard and Linda Thompson's *Shoot Out The Lights*.

"If I have a philosophy about produc-  
*continued on page 90*

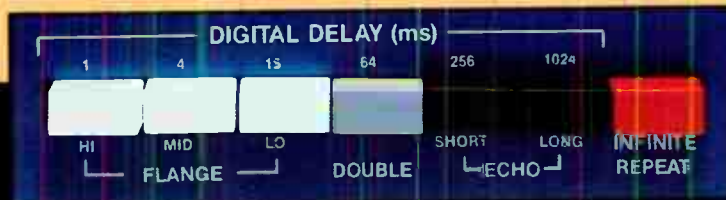
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World Radio History

Steinberger from pg. 94

unheard-of tuning ratio of 40:1 as part of its reverse tuning system. Guitarists, on the other hand, remain steadfast in their embrace of near-antiquated electric guitar technology. For them, wood still *matters*. Evolutionary changes have been necessarily predicated on design guidelines handed down from the late 40s and 50s. Steinberger is quick to recognize this, even though it pains him.

"We're not trying to reproduce the sound of a Fender or a Gibson. That's also a frequent mistake which has been very limiting in the development of the electric guitars. Their best guitars were original creations and that's what makes them special. For those of us following them, it's certainly most worthwhile to go for something new, a development, an alternative. In the future, others will hopefully build on what we're doing.

For those still firmly locked in the holy union of select hardwoods and vintage pickups, the Steinberger six-string guitar represents the Future Now, and a lot of them will not be too happy about it. With the same overall look and color of the bass, the guitar is necessarily smaller and more compact even though it has a 25½-inch scale length, arrived at by popular consensus. There is no headstock—sure to be a sore point with some guitarists—and the instrument has the same "direct pull" reverse tuning system, this time with an even more precise tuning ratio of 56:1. The one-piece molded body, like the bass, is made from several reinforced plastic materials bonded with epoxy resin. Pressed for more specifics, Steinberger elaborates without giving too much away to the competition.

"We use a proprietary blend of Thorne, Kevlar and other reinforcing fibers. Both instruments have precise arrangements of these fibers. They're weighed out to exact amounts and placed in particular locations within the instrument to yield specific resonances in the neck and body. We're going for acoustical results as well as the optimum balance and feel for the guitar. You can't separate the two in terms of the sound we're going for, that brilliant sustain. That's achieved by reflecting the vibrations *off* the instrument and back into the string, because the string is what's doing it. Surprisingly, there's a tremendous preoccupation with bodies among guitar players and builders. The body is important, but not nearly as much as the neck.

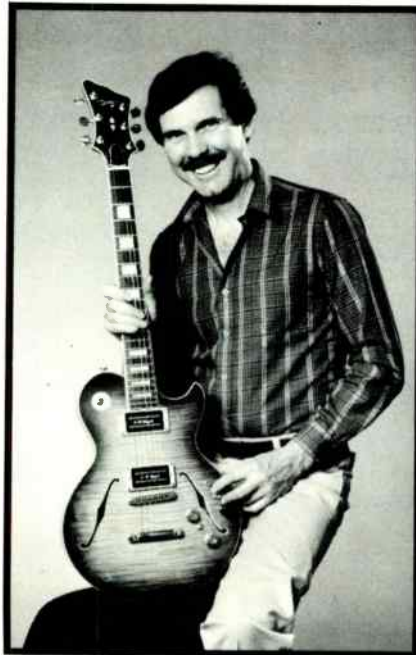
"So we use various fiber reinforcements, all of which have unique properties—like the modulus of elasticity, an important stiffness factor, a certain mass—and which are all molded into a specific shape. The unique shape of the

*continued next page*

# TOM DOYLE'S D-1 PICKUP SYSTEM

Clarity + Power = Innovation

BY CHRIS DOERING



Doyle with D-1-equipped custom guitar.

**T**W. Doyle Guitars, Inc. occupies a small two-story building in the backyard of a very ordinary North Jersey suburban home. It is an undramatic setting from which to launch a revolution, but that's just where Tom Doyle's twenty-five years in the music business have led him. Starting as an amateur tinkerer trying to get a better sound out of his Gibsons and Gretsches (while juggling simultaneous careers as a stained glass artist and professional guitarist), Doyle progressed to doing repair work for many of the New York area's best known players including Les Paul, who still sends his guitars over to be restored by Doyle and his partner for the last five years, Jeff King.

It was Les Paul, in fact, who introduced Doyle to the mysteries of pickups in 1967. Les was always interested in and has insisted on the superiority of low impedance pickups for guitar, not only for their advantages in the studio, where a low impedance pickup can go direct to the board with much lower noise than the standard high impedance pickup, but for the extra frequency response they offer.

Tom Doyle's innovations, the product of several years work and hundreds of prototypes, are twofold. For the D-1

pickup, the heart of his system, he has developed a low impedance pickup that fits in a standard size humbucking package and one that, with the special polepieces he has designed (and which cost as much as some other companies spend on their entire pickup), will put out as much juice as the classic P.A.F. (Patent-Applied For). That means plenty enough output, in other words, to overdrive your amp. The other components include a matching transformer with two selectable taps, master tone and volume controls, and a six-position varitone switch. The whole package is designed to fit the existing holes in a Les Paul or 335 control cavity with no modification required to the guitar and will give, with the pickup selector switch, thirty-six separate tonalities from one guitar, directly from the pickups.

The extended high-frequency response of the Doyle pickup is like the difference between AM and FM radio. As Jeff King, who uses the D-1 in his Les Paul through a Marshall amp says, "You get spoiled using these pickups." Harmonics and right-hand hammer-ons jump out of the speakers like they do with single-coil pickups, but the characteristic mid-range fatness of the dual-coil humbucker is still there.

For players who can't live without a really muscular bridge pickup, Doyle markets the Super Tom, a high impedance, very high output version of the D-1. Both models are made in Doyle's shop, using a custom-designed coil winder with a random cam that imitates hand winding (for some reason known only to the electrons themselves, random winding produces a pickup with higher output). The coils, polepieces and magnets are hand loaded into high-impact plastic cases on a magnetic strip that assures correct alignment of the components, then epoxied into place. Even the wiring instructions are carefully designed with colored dots to show soldering points.

The pickup system at a list price of \$235 doesn't come cheap; on the other hand these products deliver quality and more tonal flexibility than your present guitar probably has, and perhaps even that special personal sound you've always hoped to find. Things like that do not come with dollar signs. **M**

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Please examine the following conditions before completing our application form.

### Class A

To qualify, you must be a Professional Synthesist or other Recording Artist (Musician, Recording Engineer, etc.).

### First Prize

3 winners will receive a Roland SDE-2000 Digital Delay, TEAC HP-200 Pro Headphones, 2 Scotch 10" open reel tapes, and 4 Maxell 7" open reel tapes.

### Class B

To qualify, you must be a First Prize winner in one of the previous Roland Synthesizer/Tape Contests, or you must have substantial experience in synthesis or multi-track recording.

### First Prize

5 winners will receive 2 Roland PX-6 Speaker Systems, TEAC HP-200 Pro Headphones, 2 Scotch 10" open reel tapes, and 4 Maxell 7" open reel tapes.

### Grand Prix

Out of all the entries submitted, this prize will be given to an extraordinarily good piece of music. The one person selected will receive, in addition to other prizes, an exciting new Roland product coming out this year.

### Contest Specifications

- 1/Each contestant can enter only one tape, and it should be a premiere piece that has never been presented elsewhere.
- 2/The entry tape should be limited to 3 minutes in length. Any tape longer than 3 minutes will be disqualified.
- 3/The contest is limited to synthesizer pieces recorded in the multi-track method. Live performances, pieces recorded without multi-tracking, or pieces using mainly acoustic instruments or voice will be disqualified.

4/No piece entered in this contest should be entered in any other contest until the winners have been announced.

5/Copyrighted material used for radio, TV, movies or records will be excluded.

6/Copyright of the winning pieces will belong to the Roland Corporation.

7/Entries will not be returned.

### Application Procedure

Fill in all the information on the preliminary application form below. Send it to:

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You will then receive a formal Roland Contest Application, which, when completed, must accompany your tape. Send no tapes with the application below. This Preliminary Application must be received no later than August 31, 1983.

### Preliminary Application

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**Frisell** from page 82

not just music." Sometimes Damion would have Frisell accompany him while he would recite excerpts from plays, or tell Bill to play non-notated music, more shapes than sounds.

During his Berklee stay, Frisell played gigs in Boston with the likes of Mike Stern and Michael Gibbs. It was during a stint with Gibbs' big band that he landed his first recording session with Manfred Eicher, an Eberhard Weber session titled *Fluid Rustle*. "Remember when all those ECM records first hit the States? Well, I wasn't taking licks from Abercrombie or Metheny or Rypdal, but I loved the quality of that sound. Years later, I sent Manfred a demo, he remembered me, and liked it.

"I'm not scared about people calling me an ECM artist; we share a certain sensitivity about sound and color. But that's not all I'm about."

Frisell's guitar is a reclaimed late 60s Gibson SG with an interesting history. "I was on an R&B gig and the ES 175 just wasn't making it, so I sold it and got this guitar for \$200. From a hundred yards away it looked like an SG custom. But what happened was some guy covered it with white house paint and even painted the hardware gold. God, it was a joke. So I spent a year scraping it all off, put a thin coat of varnish on it, took out the vibrato and put in a stud tailpiece and a tune-a-matic. I love the softness and flexibility of it: it's incredibly light, comfortable and easy to play. And the

bridge pickup, which is all I ever use, is ringy without being shrill. But I know the neck's going to fly off soon, so I just got an old single-pickup Les Paul Junior as a backup.

"On *In Line*, I used a Lab Series L-7, which is a really warm-sounding amp. It has a great compressor so the notes just squeeze out real smooth, unlike most of them which sort of spit. But it's kind of heavy and it doesn't have channel switching ("Maybe somebody reading this article'll buy it," he adds as an aside. "I only want \$350 for it.") Now I'm using a Peavey Special, which is a 1-12", 130 watt combo, real fat and powerful, and like the least money I ever paid for a quality amp.

"For acoustics I've got an Ovation, which isn't as warm and woody as the Adamas models, but people can record them pretty well. On the *Amarcord Nina Rota* album I did, they miked it from every angle on lots of tracks, then mixed them together so it almost sounded like one guitar. I think Manfred may have gone direct on *In Line*, plus used a room mike, then in the mix they put on a lot of that Lexicon 224 reverb which imparts its own sound. Actually, I'm a little worried about all the effects I use; I love the sounds of all that delay, but I'm becoming so dependent on it, I don't know if I could play without it."

Obviously he could. Bill Frisell brings more to the effects than they bring to him, humanizing them to re-shape the voice of electric guitar. "I wish I could get the space to find some people to play these circus tunes that I've been writing. Because I'm just beginning to realize that all these years I thought I was learning to play guitar, I was really just learning to play myself. The effects, even the instrument, aren't an end in themselves...I'm just trying to clear things away to let the music come through."

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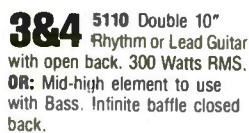
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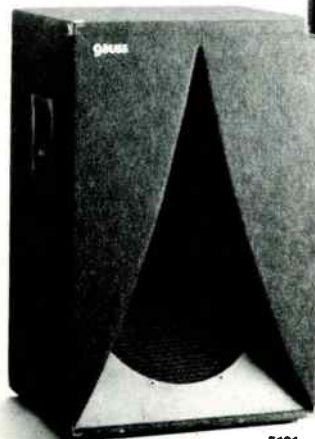
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5181

**Steinberger** from previous page

body was created to give a special identity to the product, a space-age quality. It's an attempt to express the true nature of the instrument with a distinctive shape that can stand as a trademark.

"One of the common misconceptions about a material is that it has properties of its own, independent of its shape. To analyze how a material works in a particular application, you have to fabricate the actual object to see how it responds. We're designing the materials we work with by taking these different raw materials and creating a blend. This lets us create the exact mass and stiffness we need to get the sound we're looking for."

Steinberger, who would rather be described as an industrial designer than a luthier, started out as a cabinetmaker and furniture designer after getting a Fine Arts degree from the Maryland

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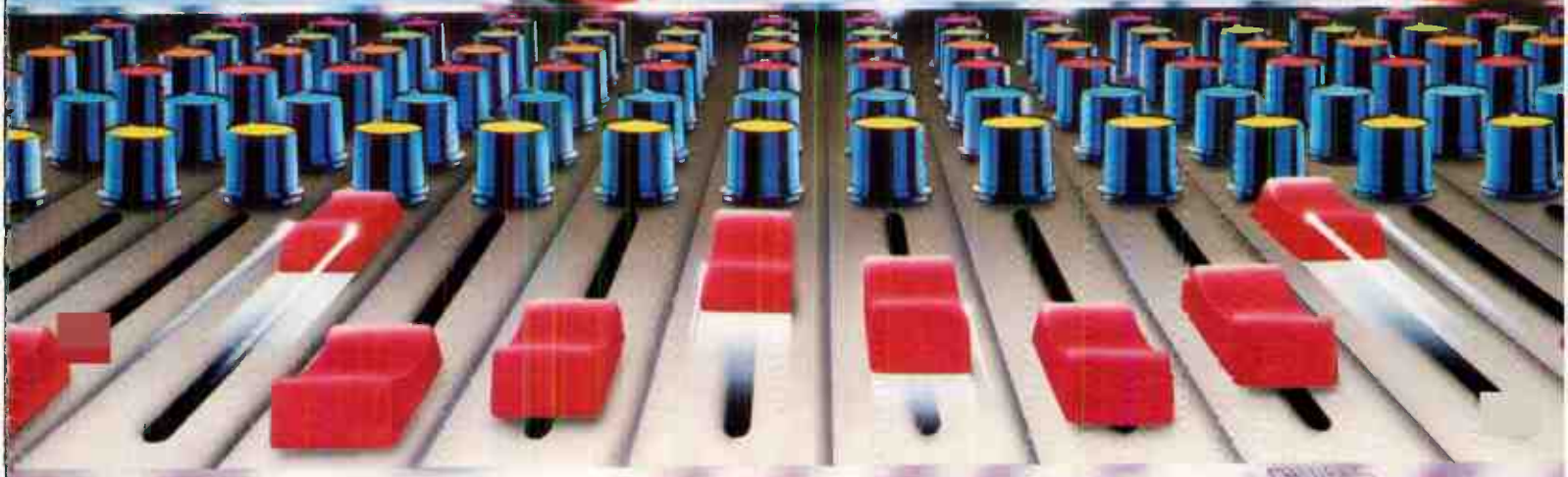
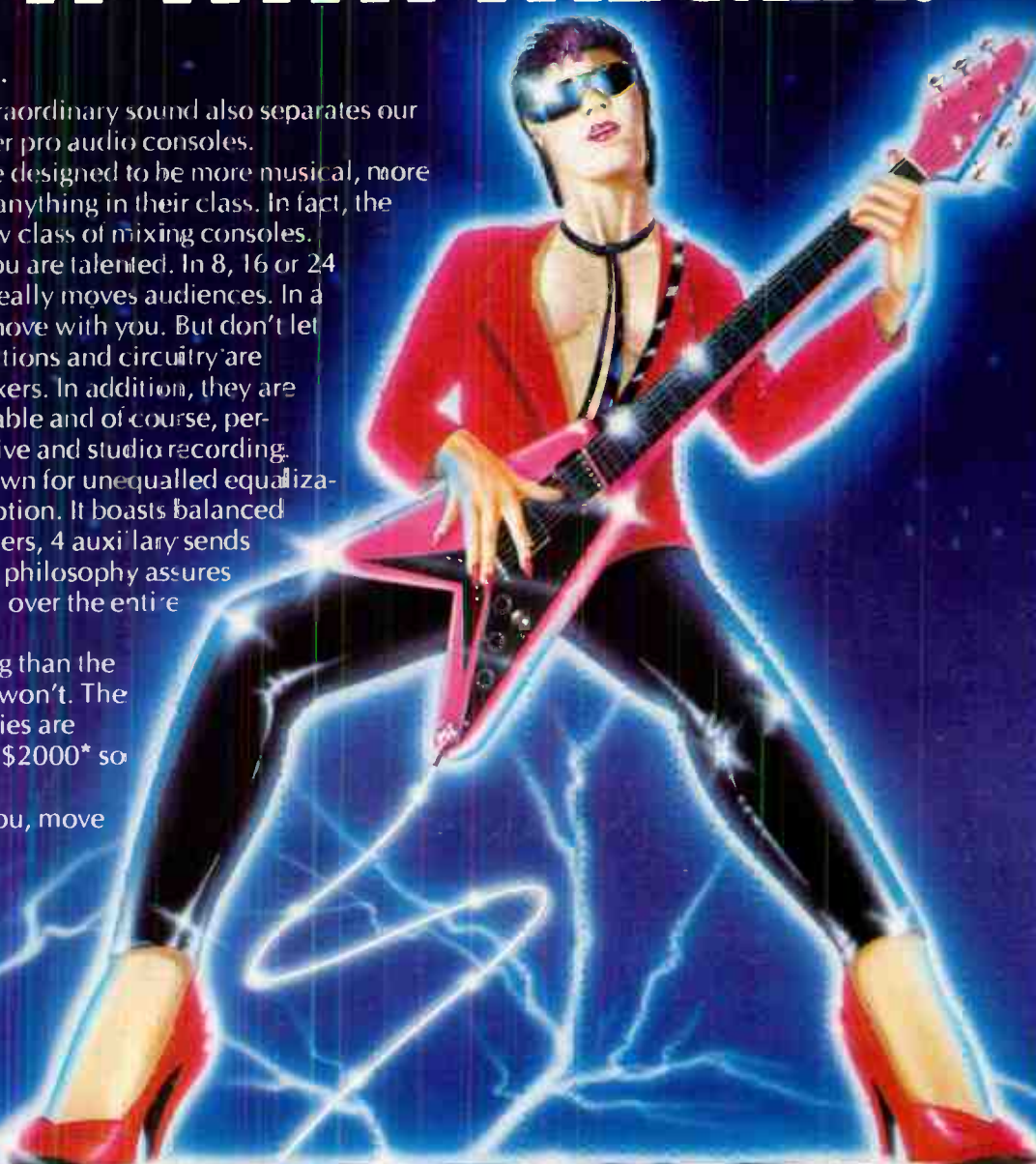
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Institute College of Arts in Baltimore. His specialty was contract furniture design: chairs, and institutional furniture for hospitals and schools that would be functional but would also adapt to various body shapes and to the greatest number of applications and use.

"After graduation," Steinberger explains, "I tried a career as a sculptor and photographer. But I eventually got back to the functional object. It was easier to justify my work on the basis that it did a job. My specialty has always been straightforward solutions to problems."

He subsequently spent several years working with Brooklyn guitar designer Stuart Spector working on handcrafted wooden basses, but he abandoned that material for his own instruments early

on. ("When I first started building electric basses, I literally didn't know the difference between a Fender and a Gibson," he cracks.) Sonic benefits notwithstanding, there were too many problems with wood, like warping and the extreme difficulty of exactly reproducing a particularly felicitous piece of maple or mahogany. And since the sonic design architecture of the Steinberger is founded on clear natural sustain, the unfortunate side effects of certain frequencies on the wood "responding enthusiastically" or vibrating sympathetically with the strings and draining them of their energy (which in turn causes "dead spots") was also a must to avoid.

Steinberger readily acknowledges that he's not the first to reverse the tuning

machines, but he feels that his approach with a solid machined brass bridge/tail-piece holding things down at the back end of the guitar increases sustain and, most importantly, greatly improves the overall balance of the guitar. Unlike his bass, though, the guitar does not have a pivot for enhanced weight distribution and playability, mainly because it doesn't need one. There is just a regular strap with clips. After all, one of Ned's primary axioms is, "If you don't need it, get it off."

In order to effectively capitalize on the in-bred sustain of the guitar, Steinberger has chosen a low-impedance system from EMG featuring two humbucking pickups with a built-in preamp for high gain configurations. These provide a very true, accurate sound with special emphasis in the midrange and upper registers. The result is lots of detail and a very cleanly defined timbre, no matter how much you overdrive the amplifier. The sustain comes from the instrument, not from the pickups.

Several guitarists, including Steve Morse of the Dregs, Mark Mothersbaugh of Devo and Arlen Roth have already tried the prototype. Reactions are already favorable and there is a growing demand among professionals for some "hands on" action. "It's one of the most road-worthy guitars known to man," enthuses Roth, a talented picker from New York who is conversant with many electric styles. "The sound and the feel seem to perfectly bridge the gap between the Gibson and the Fender. It's a great design, and just for design's sake, I'd accept the synthetic materials. But those synthetic materials are also doing away with a lot of the traditional guitar *problems*."

The prototype still requires some final tweaking in the pickup system (these have recently been moved further apart for more tonal variation; the treble pickup also got added treble at the expense of output) and there have been minor adjustments to the tuning knobs. But things look good for a successful NAMM debut in Chicago. Steinberger is nearly ready. It remains to be seen if the rest of the world is ready for his guitars. ☐

**Boyd** from pg. 84

ing, it's essentially 'don't screw it up!'" says Boyd, relaxing amid the clutter of royalty statements strewn around his Greenwich Village apartment (he also maintains a residence in London). Lacking "the mentality and the ability" to make hit records, he relies instead on intuition and common sense to compensate for his technical indifference. "If I have an ability, it is in the presence of people who are actually good at what they do to simply get out of the way as a producer and make sure nobody else or thing gets in the way. The degree to which one of my records is successful is the degree to which I limit the number of things that can go wrong."

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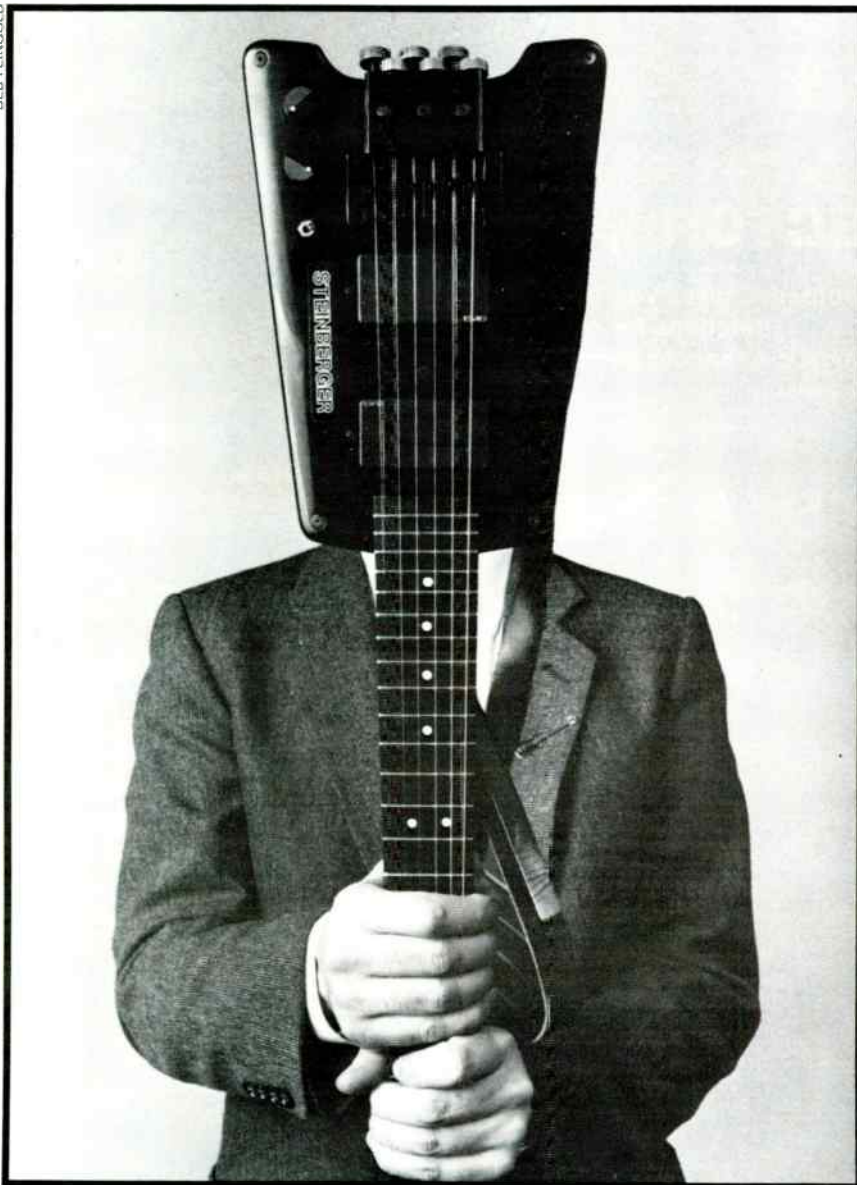
D E V E L O P M E N T S

# NED STEINBERGER: THE FUTURIST NOW

The Guitar Enters the Space Age

BY J.C. COSTA

DEB FEINGOLD



They became what they beheld: designer Steinberger and his remarkable new guitar.

For Ned Steinberger, success isn't just sweet—it's positively exhausting. For the past two years, this thirty-four-year-old former furniture designer has been working overtime to fulfill the growing worldwide demand for his revolutionary Steinberger bass, that tight black arrowhead-shaped instrument that looks like Darth Vader's idea of a Concorde jet. He is moving his company from its cramped Brooklyn quarters to upstate

Newburgh, New York as part of a major growth step to triple production. A film crew from National Public Television's *Enterprise* show is following him around, documenting his progress for a future program. All of a sudden, he's giving speeches and picking up design awards, like this year's prize for excellence in consumer products from the Industrial Designer's Society of America.

Now Steinberger, a short, curly-headed

serious artisan caught up in a maddening rock 'n' roll business, is about to go into overdrive with the June introduction of the logical successor to his highly respected bass—the Steinberger guitar. Lord knows he's hoping for a more enlightened reaction from the musical instrument industry than he got in 1979 and '80 when he first tried to get his reinforced plastic Steinberger bass off the ground. During a conversational stopover in his hectic schedule, Steinberger looked back on those first bumpy steps into the hard reality of the music industry with more bewilderment than anger about the way manufacturers initially reacted to his bass.

"By then, I had spent a lot of money on patents and the first prototypes. I was getting desperate. My friends thought I was crazy, that the bass would never succeed. La Bella Strings invited me to demonstrate the bass at the '79 summer NAMM show and I finally decided with some trepidation to do it. I didn't want to get my design knocked off, but I was willing to do *anything* to get it out there to bass players. Luckily, I had no idea how slow the music industry business was at picking up on new ideas. None of the manufacturers were interested; they didn't want to hear it. Everyone was down on plastic.

"There's a whole vacuum for applied technology and musical instruments out there. It just got stronger and eventually it dragged me kicking and screaming into it. I never wanted to be a manufacturer. But as I became more and more convinced that people needed the bass, I decided to pursue it, even if I had to make it myself."

Fortunately, leading players like King Crimson's Tony Levin focused right in on the Steinberger bass (\$1950 list price) as an instrument unto itself, free of all the usual prejudices about headless designs and the mystical godhead of wood. Once the rest of the industry witnessed the public sanctification of the bass in the skilled hands of Andy West during a live Dregs concert at the 1980 Summer NAMM show, the jeers turned to cheers. Sting of the Police, the Cars' Ben Orr, jazzman Jamaaladeen Tacuma, John Entwistle, Danny Klein of the J. Geils Band, Miles' Marcus Miller and Devo's Jerry Casale quickly picked up on the bass.

But that does not mean clear sailing for the Steinberger guitar (price not available). Bassists may have sworn by their wood Fender Precision and Jazz basses, but many of them were willing to entertain the notion of an instrument that would simultaneously sound clear and brilliant, correct the neck-heavy balance of the wooden solid-body bass, generate loads of sustain and resist climatic changes and warping while providing an



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# RECORD REVIEWS

## Marshall Crenshaw *Field Day* (Warner Bros.)



Marshall Crenshaw is a natural in a business dominated by two-bit calculators. Having already set a new standard for contemporary

pop songwriting on his critically-acclaimed debut disc of last year, Crenshaw affirms his extraordinary gift again on *Field Day*, whose maturity, clarity and sense of purpose shoots the proverbial sophomore jinx straight to hell.

Crenshaw's songs are deceptively simple; his vocals and guitar are supported by the harmonies of bassist Chris Donato and drummer Robert Crenshaw. His first record was a mini pop explosion, a catchy collection of rejuvenating songs about sentiment and desire, framed by fluid and uncluttered arrangements. It radiated a sense of rhythm and grace, an outrageously dense orgy of studio gimmickry. The creative sweat that went into making his melodies as memorable as some of those by the Beatles or Buddy Holly was wiped clean.

But growth promotes change, and on *Field Day* a truer portrait of the artist and his music emerges. Working with an extraordinarily sophisticated set of songs, producer Steve Lillywhite has captured a sound that is infinitely closer to the trio's live presentation. In hindsight, Richard Gottehrer, who directed the first album, correctly emphasized Crenshaw's songs as the featured attraction, but he failed to illuminate Crenshaw's muscular guitar playing and emotive vocals. Lillywhite has tapped those qualities with profound understanding.

He demonstrates that empathy in the ferocious drum sound. Unlike the layered percussion of the first record, *Field Day* exudes a rhythmic texture that crosses the Bo Diddley beat with the rolling thunder of "Born To Run." The guitar sound is equally riveting. Crenshaw's solos on "For Her Love" and "All I Know Right Now" are marked by a speed and economy that's equally warm and tense.

Crenshaw, although married, steadfastly avoids domesticity in his writing, which makes his lyric content universally appealing. His protagonist is a romanticist; his perspective is poignant, vulnerable and tender, and these qualities are consistently realized in his songs. It's a range rarely heard these days and a major reason why *Field Day's* pop aesthetic should stand the test of time. —Leo Sacks

## Talking Heads *Speaking In Tongues* (Sire)



I suspect that I'm going to be just as excited by *Speaking In Tongues* as I am now that the weather's getting balmy and life takes on the rhythm of summer. God knows that Talking Heads have produced their sunniest album ever, and I was particularly struck by how in synch all this music is with the pace and tempo of the human stride, the steady 1-e-and-uh, 2-e-and-uh of Walkman-equipped running (and the concurrent triplet jumps and skip-a-beat respirations of our heaving hearts and lungs). Talking Heads have come up with this party season's sleeper hit, an album made by children for children that distills the past six years into a jagged, friendly kind of aerobic afro-billy music that is helping to obliterate the separatist notions of black and white playlists.

Maybe they should have gone Paul and Stevie one better and dubbed it *Vanilla And Chocolate*, because their much-anticipated re-drawing of boundary lines between separate components has only served to strengthen their unity and blur distinctions. If anything, *Speaking In Tongues* sounds like the second album they never made.

Not that the Heads' adventures in England on the space mountain ride weren't delightful in their own dark, daffy way. Yet as Byrne cheerfully testifies, they must have been having fun, "Making it up as we go along/Feet on the ground/Head in the sky...." Our kind of people, right? Real over-achievers. And the

funny thing is that having distilled the corn mash of Jerry Harrison's synth psychedelia, Chris and Tina's bouncing baby tom hits and Byrne's post-impressionistic ethno-babble, Talking Heads have come full circle, back to the unabashed pop simplicity of *Talking Heads '77*, but with a mature new edge.

They're home. But I can already hear the mutterings...David Byrne doesn't sound messed up anymore. Blithely jogging through the changes, he's no longer practicing his "I'll writhe, you eat" routine, nor is he preaching or taking the third person. For the first time, one gets the feeling that David Byrne is speaking directly from his heart to you, peaceful and content to be doing his work.

The effect is absolutely stunning on the album closers, "Pulling Up The Roots" and "This Must Be The Place," the spiritual successors to "Life During Wartime" and "Take Me To The River"/"The Big Country," respectively. The former is a blast box special, with its ping-ponging polyrhythms, deadpanned revelations ("I get sounds out of the ground/Something under me high/But I guess it's a lie") and sumptuous fade-out by the great violinist L. Shankar (who also contributes a relaxed, yet scorching contrast to "Making Flippy-Floppy"). The latter is possibly the deepest, sweetest, most personal song Byrne has ever written.

Around him, the Heads chirp away like Sunny Ade' paraphrasing the Byrds with Jerry Harrison and Bernie Worrell proving conclusively on their Prophets that, yes, Virginia, the synthesizer is your friend. There hasn't been a more captivating, hooky radio anthem in years.

Not that Byrne and friends don't visit the outer limits too, but the tongue-in-cheek delta musings of "Swamp" and the solid dub of "I Get Wild/Wild Gravity" come from a different place. Perhaps it's Byrne's realization that he doesn't have to do it all for this band to succeed; that Chris and Tina's ever deepening New Orleans/Memphis/Motown/Ringo & Paul show is no longer derivative but definitive dance music. *Speaking In Tongues* suggests that in their new synthesis, Talking Heads can help us imagine a pop epiphany that is best appreciated in terms of constant growth

rather than fashionable decay. Unity in diversity, the kind of rock music we can grow old to and enjoy with our children, because Talking Heads insist on addressing that spirit of wily innocence in us all, and what's more, now they're talking with us—not at us.—*Chip Stern*

## Barbara Paige

*Hear Me Now* (Epiphany)



In 1980, when Bob Marley's cancer was diagnosed at Manhattan's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital and his last U.S. tour was abruptly

canceled, the Wailers band had no recourse but to return to Kingston and wait out their leader's struggle to live, hoping he'd cheat death as he had during an assassination attempt in 1976.

In January of 1981, the idle Wailers and their engineer, Errol Brown, were approached with a unique project: backing a black female singer from Cleveland who had a canny root's passion for reggae that was tempered by strong R&B savvy. Wailers guitarist Earl "Chinna" Smith was so impressed with the woman's pipes and her affinity for the nuances of 80s reggae that he coaxed the group into an album-length commitment. Once the tracks were laid down, cassette tapes began to find their way into the American reggae radio grapevine and the response was electric: somehow, a vibrant, brassy/supple singer-songwriter who grew up (literally and figuratively) with Bobbie Womack and the O'Jays had wrought a singularly credible R&B-filtered interpretation of Jamaican rock, taking American reggae the crucial step beyond Stevie Wonder's "Masterblaster." Here was a record that could be programmed with pride by any black station in the land and mainstream AOR to boot, yet it generated excitement among the most dread purists and disbelievers. And the Wailers sounded like they were having a seamless ball!

The tape wound up on the playlists of shows from "The Reggae Beat" on KCRW in Santa Monica to WBCN's "Reggae Bloodlines" in Boston. Barbara Paige's feat became an underground classic, praise heaped on her slinky-sly cover of Dennis Brown's Jamaican hit, "Money In My Pocket" (backed by Brown himself on Fender Rhodes) and her sublimely sinuous duet with Third World band lead singer Bunny "Rugs" Clarke on "Resist."

The razor-sharp, teasingly elastic interplay of the Barrett brothers' rockers rhythm section is threaded through the confident, spare R&B fabric of *Hear Me Now* to create a solid package of soul-reggae party music. Paige's Tammi Terrell/Deniece Williams-flavored attack

on prime dance tracks like "Babylon Must Fall" and "Doin' The Night Right" is fired by a flawless mix that highlights Carly Barrett's sizzling "one drop" stick-work on snare and highhat and Family Man's bravura talking-bass. Earl "Wya" Lindo's organ simmers and swells like a storm at sea and gives the tracks a spacious, atmospheric texture. But throughout, the emphasis is on a new kind of fun—a die-cut marriage of kindred Kingston and stateside spirits that succeeds through heartfelt exuberance that could never have been calculated. In 1982, the biggest import hit on the island was Deniece Williams's "Silly." If there's any justice, Barbara Paige's bell-clear "Babylon Must Fall" or "Resist" will find favor in both Kingston and Cleveland. The record is fresh, delightfully innovative, and very important. And it's dedicated to Bob.

*Hear Me Now* can be ordered from Epiphany Records, P.O. Box 31125, San Francisco, CA 94131. —*Timothy White*

## Red Rockers

*Good As Gold* (Columbia)



Although much has been made of how AOR radio has finally emerged from the Stone Age and begun playing "new music," less has been said about how eager the new music bands have been to accommodate radio's conservatism in the face of progress. Take Red Rockers, for instance. This New Orleans quartet's debut, *Condition Red*, was mostly *de rigueur* crash and stomp, 1977-style, right down to song titles like "Guns Of Revolution" and "White Law" ("White Riot" having already been taken). *Good As Gold*, on the other hand, plays down the raw energy angle in favor of good hooks, well-crafted arrangements and solid grooves, resulting in a sound far closer to the unfunky Gang of Four than a punk Clash.

Musically, the change has obviously been to the band's advantage. The careful attention to song structure has strengthened what might otherwise have been pedestrian material, while galvanizing stronger numbers, such as the title track, "Til It All Falls Down" and the mesmerizing single, "China." John Griffith's vocals are seldom more than competent, but the canny reinforcement of James Singletary's guitar lines helps keep the emphasis on melody, a wise move given the general stiffness of the rhythm section.

Yet as appealing as the music often is, it is seldom compelling, and the best guess as to why would be that the group pays too much attention to the ideological slant of their lyrics. Although they deny communist leanings, the class

analysis and anti-capitalist cant of "Good As Gold," "Til It All Falls Down" and "Home Is Where The War Is" make it clear that the Red in Red Rockers isn't a reference to the color of the Columbia label. Granted, this group has as much right as any to use their album to espouse their political views, but it's not hard to find yourself wishing that the Red Rockers would realize that there's more power to be had in the music than could ever be mustered by the handful of slogans masquerading as lyrics, no matter how politically "correct." Maybe it's just that music, although it moves people, doesn't always move them along the ideological tracks political interest groups have in mind; but if that's what Red Rockers are afraid of, perhaps we're better off as is. —*J.D. Considine*

## Stevie Ray Vaughan

*Texas Flood* (Epic)

Stevie Ray Vaughan

Ten years after rock fans stopped asking themselves if white men can really play the blues (basically because they stopped listen-

ing to anybody play them), guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan comes roaring out of Texas on giant wings of hype. Rumors of great barroom performances with his band Double Trouble and its original lead singer Lou Ann Barton have snowballed into private label auditions for the Rolling Stones, the patronage of veteran talent scout John Hammond and now half a year's arena-hopping with David Bowie. Comparisons with the state's other Great White Blues Hope Johnny Winter are already running amok; it doesn't help that Tommy Shannon, bassist with Winter's classic late 60s trio, is also present here, anchoring Vaughan's flights of guitar ecstasy in solid rock with muscular good sense and subtle agility (ditto drummer Chris Whipper Layton).

Vaughan's debut album *Texas Flood* certainly proves one thing—he can't sing the blues. A graduate of the George Thorogood School of Blues Tenors, he barks and howls his way through Howlin' Wolf's "Tell Me" and Buddy Guy's South Side nursery rhyme "Mary Had A Little Lamb" with a cheery bravado that is admirable if not inspirational. But his playing is a revelation, a celebration of rootsy purity that beats the nostalgia trap with a bold physicality and pure punk fire.

How deep can Vaughan's blues get? In his recent *Musician* interview, Bowie noted that Vaughan—younger brother of Fabulous Thunderbirds guitar man Jimmie Vaughan—is such a purist "he thinks Jimmy Page is a modernist." Sure enough, his steamy solo break on the

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rollin' and tumblin' "Love Struck Baby" hearkens back to Elmore James' "Dust My Broom" boogie twang, Vaughan's guitar clanging like a fire alarm even as it bends and twists down a Chuck Berry slalom course. There is a taste of the sinewy twirl and whiplash fillips of Freddie King in the slow blues title track, while everywhere else you can't help noticing hints of both B.B. and Albert King in the biting pointillism and snappy fluency of his playing.

Nevertheless, a strong Hendrix fixation permeates *Texas Flood*. It is particularly evident on the two instrumentals "Testify," a stormy double-time rave-up, and the sweet lyrical "Lenny" as his guitar, slightly rusted with sandpaper distortion, stretches and gently but firmly contorts its licks with a coltish jump and sexual elasticity, somersaulting into melodic curlicues and weird baroque curves (particularly in "Lenny") that recall Hendrix' space-blues fantasies "Little Wing" and "Castles Made Of Sand." More importantly, Vaughan incorporates these flourishes into his other straight blues numbers with an intuitive grace Hendrix surely would have envied.

In a way, *Texas Flood* is a static success. Academically, it is more interesting to hear this blues cowboy negotiate the modern pop turns of Bowie's *Let's Dance* album. But if he sounds more comfortable here, the familiar surroundings inspire him to stretch out more vigorously. *Texas Flood* comes at you with no pretensions, just hot guitar and basic rhythms played with a fearsome energy. Don't bother trying to get out of the way. —David Fricke

## Lester Bowie

**All The Magic/The One And Only (ECM)**

### LESTER BOWIE

For me, what makes Lester Bowie such a precious commodity is his childlike (a.k.a. artistlike) curiosity and sensitivity to the beauty, humor,

pain and infinite variety of texture recondite in mundane existence. Picasso could take his dinner, play with it, examine it from every angle and ten minutes later translate it into art. Bowie can take the sounds of gurgling water in the valves of his trumpet, an impression of a truck horn, a tune like "Let The Good Times Roll" and weave them into a vibrant patchwork that taps our collective consciousness in a way that forces us to react to the world with renewed awareness. As Cecil Taylor recently pointed out to me, Bowie can slip in and out of musical styles in much the way great actors perform many different roles.

It's hard to single out any one Bowie effort as most representative and satis-





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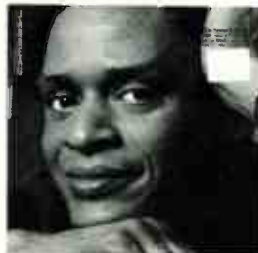
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fying, but if I had to, I'd probably choose this double-record masterpiece. The first record very appealingly spans vast segments of black heritage from an Armstrong tribute to collective free splat, all organically linked and stamped with the majestic Bowie seal. And in keeping with the blues, which Bowie assures us is the ultimate nexus here, he has selected a sextet of unusually rich, full, distinctive vocal and instrumental voices. Even Albert Ayler would have dug the good natured energy of "Ghosts."

Featuring Bowie on trumpet "and other sounds," *The One And Only* is just that, and perhaps the most important solo horn recording of our generation. It reads like a free verse epic poem; stripping away the masks of strict style to head directly to the soul. The love and affection of "Deb Deb's Face," the nasty three-trumpet growls of "Charlie M (Part II)," the solemn Sunday morning introspection of "Almost Christmas," the hilarious insanity of "Miles Davis Meets Donald Duck" meld into a free association collage that runs the emotional gamut from the most simple joys to the smirky sophistication of urbane witticism. Only Bowie could have pulled it off. —Cliff Tinder

**Al Jarreau**  
**Jarreau** (Warner Bros.)



Although pop has always seemed Al Jarreau's destiny, his disposition toward jazz kept getting in the way. It wasn't so much that

Jarreau bopped when he should have rocked; rather, his prodigious chops and penchant for overly sophisticated songs found him continually emphasizing the wrong things. Since *Breakin' Away*, however, Jarreau has been working out a compromise between his craft and his commercial appeal, and with *Jarreau* he finally seems to have found the mix that will let him have his cake and hit records, too.

The key factor here is songs, and for Jarreau, it isn't simply a matter of finding good ones. What Jarreau needs is material that suits his abilities without over-emphasizing them, and as evidenced by "Mornin'," "Step By Step" and "Black And Blues," he and producer Jay Graydon have the specs nailed down. By working with complex harmonic structures under an essentially direct melodic line, these songs make use of Jarreau's accuracy and pliancy without sending his voice off on any improvisatory tangents. Instead, Jarreau gets to work out discreetly, showing off with such devices as the fill-like phrase that connects

*continued on page 104*



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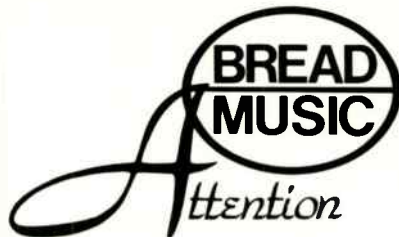
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## Record Reviews from pg. 100

the two sing-song themes in the verse to "Mornin'." Not only does this give Jarreau a chance to stretch out a bit, but the contrast adds enough extra energy to keep the performance bouncing along.

How far Jarreau will be able to take his pop chops remains to be seen, but one good sign is that he shares songwriting credit on most of the best material here. Amazingly enough, it may yet turn out that Jarreau will produce music as exceptional as his voice. —J.D. Considine

## Dave Edmunds Information (Columbia)

### The Blasters

*Non Fiction* (Slash/Warner Bros.)



With his second post-Rockpile solo bid, Dave Edmunds' loving expert mimicry of classic rock 'n' roll forms hits a crucial pass. His singular talent for bringing those forms

back *alive* with hearty reinvestments of energy, enthusiasm and wry humor is indisputable—transformed by a wondrous studio alchemy that gives Edmunds' rockabilly boogie a bright modern radiance without undermining its religious authenticity. But *Information* is pregnant with a dangerous sense of *deja vu*, of having been here too many times before. While the hard grooving cover of NRBQ's "I Want You Bad" certainly hits the spot, and "Have A Heart" shuffles Beach Boy harmonies, Chuck Berry locomotion and boozy pub-rock charm with a royal flush, too much of this album is just Edmunds' Good Thing revisited, lots of fun with no surprises.

Edmunds must have seen this cul-de-sac dead ahead because for two tracks here he contracts ELO's Jeff Lynne to liven things up, which is like bringing in an interior decorator to run a construction crew. For the last few years, Lynne has been releasing mostly bad Klaatu imitations, half-baked *Abbey Roads* for 101 Synths. What this does to Lynne's own perky "Slippin' Away" and Edmunds' breezy title track is reduce two very catchy songs with crafty winning hooks to pop corn, undone by incongruous synth noodlings and that chirpy electronic choir effect that has become such an annoying trademark of recent ELO records. Even worse, Edmunds then tries his own hand at this micro-chip gimmickry, turning the coy C&W-styled ballad "The Watch On My Wrist" into bad robot MOR. I admire Edmunds' attempt to punch his way out of that good time rock 'n' blues bag, but this kind of cotton candy electropop is a betrayal of his own extraordinary ability to raise rock basics to rarified art-and-party heights.

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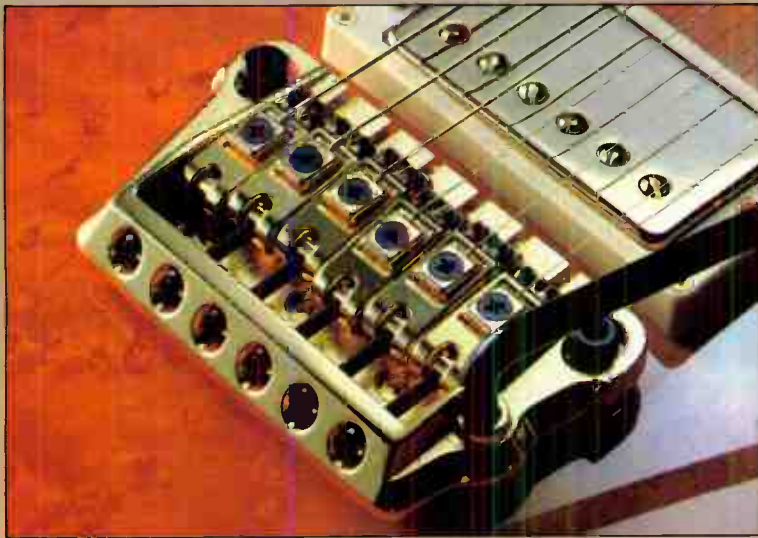
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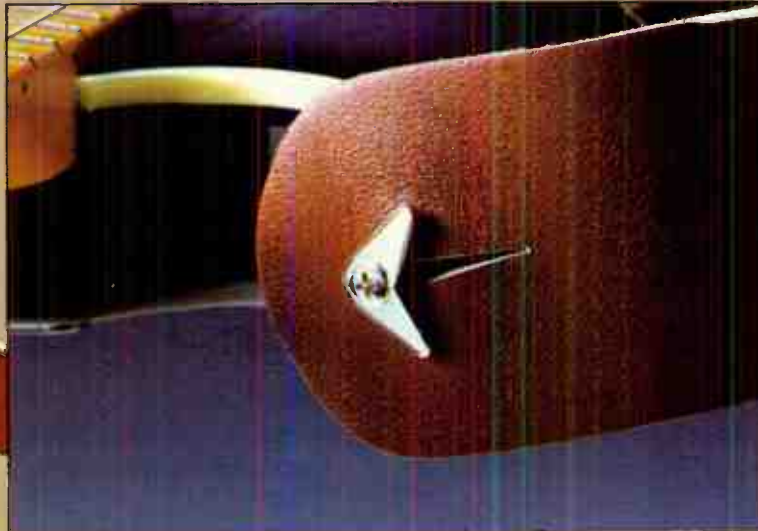
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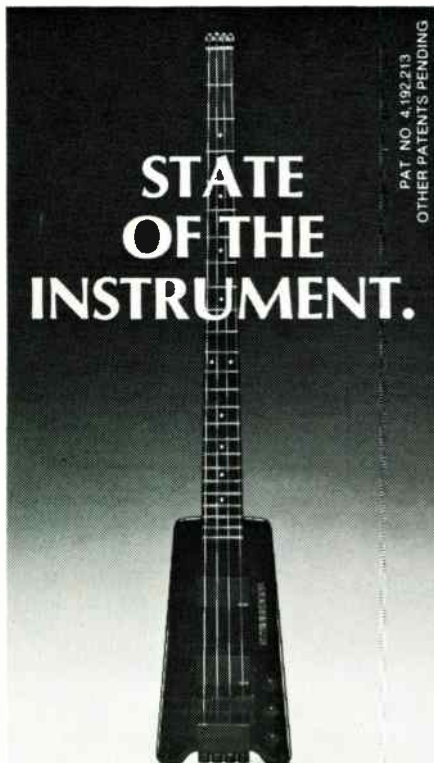
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Revisionists of an even purer stripe, the Blasters face a similar dilemma with a wiser solution. Already armed with guitarist Dave Alvin's stylistically evocative and lyrically sharp original songs, they spark their commitment to rockabilly, honky blues and jump boogie traditions with inspired performances and a lively open production that comes much closer than last year's *The Blasters* to capturing the epic exuberance of the band on stage. You can almost see the sweat gathering on singer Phil Alvin's long balding brow as his voice goes from cracked hillbilly yodel to cool Presley swagger in nothing flat, the perspiration dripping in the discreet ambient cracks between bassist John Bazz and drummer Bill Bateman's tight chooglin', Dave Alvin's colorful chops, and blubbery Gene Taylor's bawdyhouse piano ping. (A tornado watch should always be in effect every time saxmen Lee Allen and Steve Berlin even get near their horns.)

The emotional commitment of Dave Alvin's songs reinforces the group's passionate houseparty thrust, cutting through the music's *Happy Days* mythology with a vengeance. While "Jubilee Train" with its railroad gospel drive and Phil Alvin's sermonizing undercuts salvation's promise with bleak Depression imagery, "Boomtown" sifts through the ashes of Raygunomics.

And always there's the music, not just a vehicle to carry the songs or background filler, but an explosive absorbent that sucks in all the fears and tears and joys of these characters and fires them off in full glorious color. Like the Mexicali swing that draws you into the broken romance of Dave Alvin's classic "Border Radio" on the last album, the jukebox blasting the jazzy Joe Turner-style romp in "One More Dance" keeps a girl in the singer's arms a few precious minutes longer. The Blasters continue to succeed where Edmunds, for all his inventiveness, fails because they ground *Non Fiction* in real life and real life sounds. Honesty, especially in rock 'n' roll, is still the best policy. —David Fricke

### Van Morrison

#### *Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart* (Warner Bros.)



This is a far cry from the Van Morrison the Hell's Angels like to party to. It ventures instead into the other terrain Morrison can walk through so inimitably—the landscape he shares with pastoral mystics like the Lake District poets or William Butler Yeats. The momentarily offputting aspect of this album is the pervasiveness of instrumental tracks—almost 20 minutes'

worth. In addition, there's over a half hour of tracks with vocals. So the gripe is not a paucity of songs but rather a lack of focus, an inarticulate concept. "I'm a soul in wonder" sings Van over and over on the lulling title track. He lets a chorus of vibrantly seconding gospel singers suggest why but nowhere does he quite tell us. Adoration of some unknown deity seems to suffuse this record, and lovely zephyrs on uilleann pipes, flutes, trumpet and sax play through it, but we don't quite share Van's sanctified, "Higher Than The World" mood, or see where it derives from (though there is what some would call an ominous "Special Thanks" to scientology guru L. Ron Hubbard among the credits).

"Rave On John Donne" is a prolix ("Rave on through the industrial revolution, and Empiricism and the atomic and nuclear age...") but forceful tribute. The formidable taste of Morrison's fine ensemble players (bassist David Hayes helped him produce) becomes almost too tidy here; "Cry For Home" is formulaic, easy-access Van, and "The Street Only Knew Your Name" has some worldly-wise, visceral oomph but no real edge. Morrison is one of our richest talents and he has every right to stretch out on LPs like this—but I'd trade the whole 55 minutes for the stern impassioned majesty he achieves throughout the four minutes of "Wonderful Remark" from the current *King Of Comedy* soundtrack —Fred Schruers

### Muddy Waters from pg. 10

tinderbox good times. Muddy's music documented it all. He was always there, it seemed, in the right place at the right time: in Stovall, Mississippi, in 1941, when he was first recorded by folklorist Alan Lomax as one of the chief inheritors of the Robert Johnson tradition; in Chicago with Chess Records, just when Chess, one of the giants of the post-war recording industry, was starting up; at the Fillmores and the Electric Circuses in the psychedelic 60s when white America jumped on the blues. His whole career was based not on accident, though, but on force of personality for McKinley Morganfield was a very ambitious and directed man.

One of the last times I saw him he was playing Boston once again, and his guitarist, Bob Margolin, took me backstage to reintroduce me and say hello. "Hey, man," said Muddy, in that nervous, stammered way that was so at odds with his phlegmatic manner, "there's something I want you to see." A broad smile creased his face as he introduced me to a woman named Anne Anderson. "This is Robert Johnson's sister," he announced proudly. "Here, show him. Show him the picture." From her wallet Anne Anderson drew a picture of a man with a guitar: it was indeed Robert Johnson, I knew, continued on page 114



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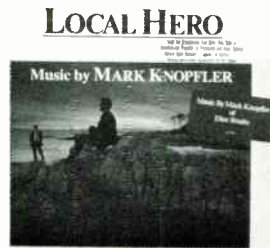
By J.D. Considine

## S H O R T T A K E S

Jackie Wilson



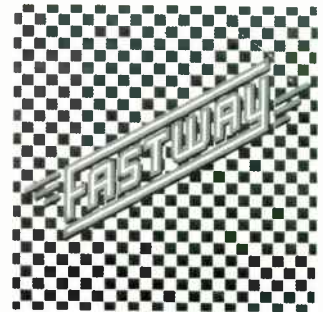
Mark Knopfler



Steve Arrington



Fastway



**Sly & the Family Stone** — *Ain't But The One Way* (Warner Brothers) Not exactly a Whole New Thing, but not a bad update of the old one. Even with twenty-or-so studio extras helping out, the musical emphasis is still on community and interplay. As a result, the rhythms are as astutely layered and danceably direct as ever, although the singing is a little slicker than before. The only real lack is lyrical (unless you think "Hobo Ken/Be your friend" is a particularly pithy analysis of urban sociology), but even if this Family Stone doesn't take us higher, they certainly don't leave us lower, either.

**Patrick Simmons** — *Arcade* (Elektra) Simmons wants us to know that *he* was responsible for the Doobie Brothers' sound, and sure enough, this album comes complete with the lush vocals, jazzy harmonies and polished pulse the Doobies were famous for. Now all we have to do is figure out who was responsible for the Doobie Brothers' hooks.

**Tears for Fears** — *The Hurting* (Mercury) Unlike so much industrial pop, which seems obsessed with its minimal beat, lean lines and sparse texture to the exclusion of all else, Tears for Fears maintain product control with a keen ear for melody and hooks. Not that any of these ten tunes quite lands them in Knack country, just that they've managed the trick of being fashionably austere and immensely hummable at the same time. A small victory, but it makes a big difference.

**Jackie Wilson** — *The Jackie Wilson Story* (Epic) The interest here isn't just historical (although if you still think Rita Coolidge did the original "Higher And Higher," maybe you ought to take notes).

Jackie Wilson had one of the greatest pop voices of his or any other age, and the ease with which he merges the abandon of R&B with the calculated suavity of mainstream pop still holds potent lessons. This selection, lovingly compiled by Gregg Geller and Joe McEwen, proves both Wilson's depth and breadth, and deserves a space in every rock collection.

**Martha & the Muffins** — *Danseparc* (RCA) Scaled down to a quartet, M+M sounds both sharper and surer than in their "Echo Beach" days, with Mark Ganes' guitar pushed front and center while newcomers Jocelyne Lanois and Nick Kent shore things up with a rhythmic agility the old Muffins rather lacked. But this is still Martha Johnson's show, even when the songs are not, and it's her personality reflected off the others that gives *Danseparc* the sort of sexual spark the Au Pairs could only theorize.

**Mark Knopfler** — *Local Hero* (Warner Bros.) This collection of mostly instrumentals written for the Bill Forsyth film *Local Hero* will be sure to alienate those who found *Love Over Gold* too understated and impressionistic, but that doesn't mean that it will necessarily thrill those—like me—who thought otherwise. As with all good soundtracks, much of this music fades into the background, and though careful attention will usually be rewarded, you may want to ask yourself if you've got that much time.

**Steve Arrington's Hall of Fame** — *I* (Atlantic) Arrington made his mark as the slippery-voiced singer on Slave's "Snap Shot," and much of this album is elevated by his post-Al Green testifying, which is to be expected. The sure-

footed grooves, which slide from steamy balladry to full-force funk with consummate ease, are not, and that's what makes this album such a joy. With both the singer and rhythm section conspiring to push each song over the edge, the Hall of Fame tag may well prove to be more than mere boast.

**Robert Palmer** — *Pride* (Island) Considering what a stuffed-shirt Palmer sounded like while working with his blue-eyed soul scam, you'd think he'd be a natural for the heavily mannered synth-pop he currently dabbles in. Instead, he sounds like a dutiful student who kept falling asleep at all the lectures—the basic ideas are all there, he just never figures out how to make them work.

**The Rockats** — *Make That Move* (RCA) In case you wondered what the Stray Cats would have sounded like with synthesizers and a Marvin Gaye cover.

**Fastway** — *Fastway* (Columbia) Thanks to the presence of ex-Motorhead guitarist Fast Eddie Clarke and the former Humble Pie drummer Jerry Shirley, the British rock press is touting this as a supergroup. Maybe so, but for my money, what's super about Fastway is the way they flesh out Motorhead's amphetaminated overdrive with hooks as strong as those on "Easy Livin'" and a singer as enjoyable as Robert Plant-clone David King. There may be nothing new, but here it all works.

**Arthur Alexander** — *A Shot Of Rhythm And Soul* (Ace Import) Arthur Alexander was responsible for the original versions of "Anna" (covered by the Beatles), "Soldiers Of Love" (covered by Marshall Crenshaw by way of the Beatles) and "You'd Better Move On" (covered by

*continued on pg. 114*

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Steve Gadd

Because I've always been very concerned with the quality of sound in a drum, I use the Recording Custom Series drums, with these beautiful all-birch shells and a black piano finish. They give me a very controlled resonance with a lot of tone. They let me relax with the music, so I can adjust my touch to any volume requirements. Yamaha drums are very sensitive, and there's always a reserve of sound.

I've always tended to go for simple equipment like the Tour Series snare drum with eight lugs, because it's easier for me to get the sound. Same thing goes for my hardware, which is why I like the 7 Series hardware. I don't require really heavy leg bracing so the lightweight stands are just fine; very quiet, too.



Rocky White

With some drums, there isn't too much you can do to alter the sound. Some will give you a real deep thud, and others are real bright. With Yamaha, I can get both sounds, they're just very versatile. Mostly I like a deep round sound with tight definition, since my concept is that a drum is a melodic instrument like anything else. I can hear drum pitches, and Yamaha lets me achieve that without a lot of constant re-tuning.

As far as their hardware, the snare drum stand and boom stands are very well thought-out. They feel like they were designed by a drummer, and they're not limited at all. The 9 Series snare drum stand's ball tilter is fantastic; you can get the perfect angle for your playing posture. And the boom stand tilter can double as two stands because it doesn't have a long handle. So the boom slides right inside the rest of the stand if you don't need it. All in all, Yamaha is the perfect set of drums for tone quality, sound, and ease of set-up.



Cozy Powell

I'd been playing the same set of drums for ten years when I met up with the Yamaha people during a tour of Japan with Rainbow. I told them that if they could come up with a kit that was stronger, louder and more playable than what I had, I'd play it. So they came up with this incredible heavy rock kit with eight ply birch shells, heavy-duty machined hoops and a pair of 26" bass drums that are like bloody cannons. And since I'm a very heavy player who needs a lot of volume, Yamahas are perfect for me. And the sound just takes off—the projection is fantastic so I can get a lot of volume without straining.

There isn't an electric guitarist in the world who can intimidate me, and I've played with the loudest. Yamaha drums just cut through better, like a good stiletto. They have the fattest, warmest, most powerful sound of any kit I've played and they can really take it. For my style, Yamaha is the perfect all-around rock kit.



Peter Erskine

Yamaha makes professional equipment with the professional player in mind. They're just amazing-sounding drums, and the fact that their shells are perfectly in-round has a lot to do with it. The head-to-hoop alignment is consistent; the nylon bushing inside the lugs are quiet and stable so Yamahas tune real easy and stay in tune, too. I have a 5½" snare and it's good as anything out there. It speaks fast, with a really brilliant sound and a lot of power. When you hit it hard, the drum just pops. And the throw-off mechanism is quick and agile, with good snare adjustment—it's a basic design that works.

And Yamaha hardware is really ingenious, every bit as good as the drums. I like the 7 Series hardware because it's light and strong, especially the bass drum pedal, which has a fast, natural feel. What can I say? Everything in the Yamaha drums system is so well designed, you want for nothing. Once you hook up with them, you'll stay with them.

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# JAZZ

By Francis Davis

## SHORT TAKES

**David Holland** — *Life Cycle* (ECM) The vibrancy, stealth and sense of forward motion Holland regularly brings to the bass he here successfully grafts on to the cello, for a pensive but far from dour solo recital of his own compositions. Still—vibrancy, stealth and forward motion are qualities even more admirable in a group setting, and it's been ten long years since Conference of the Birds. Let's hope ECM rushes Holland's promising new band with Julian Priestner and Kenny Wheeler into the studio soon.

**Steps Ahead** — *Steps Ahead* (Elektra/Musician) Fast lane mercenaries Mike Brecker, Mike Manieri, Eddie Gomez and Peter Erskine have joined ranks with new keyboard recruit Elaine Elias to patrol the middle of the road, and the recruits are not bad, just derivative of mid '60s Miles and Shorter and a hundred other things.

**Various Artists** — *Bill Evans, A Tribute* (Palo Alto) Fourteen pianists separately pay last respects to Evans, and in general the interlopers (Wilson, Lewis, McKenna, Tyner, Rowles), whose patrician styles would seem to have little to do with the departed, come closer to evoking his lyric sensibility than the thundering herd (Hancock, Corea, Beirach, Laverne, Brackeen) ostensibly derived from him. Denny Zeitlin's "Quiet Now" delivers the most evocative personal remembrance of all of them, though.

**Anthony Braxton & John Lindberg** — *Six Duets 1982*. **Lindberg & Hugh Ragin** — *Team Work*. **Lindberg & Marty Erlich** — *Unison* (all Cecma, available from Daybreak Express, P.O. Box 250, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215) From Italy, here are three albums of searching duets anchored by Lindberg, the most astounding bassist to emerge this decade. I realize Braxton would probably prefer to be devising parallelograms for interplanetary orchestras, but his LP with Lindberg proves once again that duet situations still inspire both his most engrossing writing and his most shearing improvisations. Trumpeter Ragin is more bullish than Braxton, and his duets with Lindberg are even richer in rhythmic febricity and melodic ingenuity. Both men contribute provocative themes with flexible boundaries, and "My Foolish Heart" is alchemized into a bouncy

canon. Lindberg's interactions with reed player Erlich haven't as much punch or sparkle, except for a long brimming rumination upon Mingus' "The Shoes Of The Fisherman's Wife."

**Max Roach** — *In The Light* (Soul Note/PolyGram Special Imports) The quartet the great drummer commands is as tight as a drum, one of the most explosive units around and one of the most consistently rewarding. But despite springing tenor work by the reliable Odean Pope and the leader's seismic drumming, this new record, weighed down by overly familiar bop standards, doesn't really capture the band at its peak.

**I/S/M** — *R* (Zoar) Populist, avant-garde Elliot Sharp and partners-in-sound argue that the noises of heavy industry are actually pretty infectious, beguiling at times, and I'm almost convinced. But not quite. (Available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, NY, NY 10012.)

**Mal Waldron** — *One Entrance, Many Exits* (Palo Alto) The needling pianist at his cagiest and most calescent—in solo, in duet with bassist David Freisen and at the helm of a quartet boasting drummer Billy Higgins and tenorist Joe Henderson. Henderson's ripe for rediscovery, I'd say, and he sounds fabulous with Waldron scheming beneath him.

**Dexter Gordon** — *Lullaby For A Monster* (SteepleChase) Still another souvenir from Gordon's European sojourn, and may the supply never be exhausted if those dates we've yet to hear are even half as exciting as this trio date from 1976, with NHØP and drummer Alex Reil (remember Savage Rose?) exploding the old wives' tale that European rhythm sections don't swing. Spry, robust, endlessly inventive tenor with interpolations that are even wittier and more harmonically apposite than normal.

**Art Farmer** — *Mirage* (Soul Note/PSI)

**Nat Adderley** — *On The Move* (Theresa) Two pleasant reminders that the venerable two-horns-plus-rhythm format can still offer epiphanies, especially when the leader is as lyrical as fluegelhornist Farmer or as droll as cornetist Adderley, the saxophonist as bold as their respective foils Clifford Jordan and Sonny Fortune, and the rhythm section as light and

bracing as either of those heard here.

**Jack Walrath** — *A Plea For Sanity* (Stash) *In Europe* (SteepleChase) Trumpeter Walrath is hardly a charismatic soloist, but his writing is pithy and good humored, and his bands always burn. The Stash is a trio with pianist Michael Cochrane and bassist Anthony Cox; the SteepleChase adds drummer Jimmy Madison and the irascible trombonist Glenn Ferris.

**Tom Varner** — *Motion/Stillness* (Soul Note/PSI) Varner is a young French horn player who combines a trumpeter's gift of song with a trombonist's capacity for mischief and breakage, and his second quartet outing is even better than his grievously overlooked 1981 debut. Varner's themes are crustier and more distinctive, less beholden to Lacy and Ornette, and his rapport with altoist Ed Jackson has grown even deeper and more exact.

**Jessica Williams** — *Update* (Clean Cuts) The vast differences in approach from record to record either mean she's a protean pianist or she's yet to find her own way (probably the latter). I think this lilting, low-key record (which benefits measurably from the presence of Eddie Harris, always less prone to humiliate himself as a sideman than as a leader) is the best she's made so far.

**Alvin Queen** — *Glidin' And Slidin'* (Nilva) Another fine record from drummer Queen, leading a trio this time and departing from his brand of Blue Note revivalism to create an after-hours ambience for the dapper blues piano of Junior Mance (from N.M.D.S.).

**Vinnie Golia** — *Slice Of Life* (Nine Winds) Energy music from the L.A. underground. Golia brandishes an arsenal of reeds with heedless abandon, but his most convincing moments occur when he swears fidelity to tenor and holds his tongue long enough to lend an ear to bassist Roberto Miranda and drummer Alex Cline (from N.M.D.S., 500 Broadway, New York, NY, 10012).

**David Grisman** — *Dawg Jazz* (Warner Bros.) Country flavored parlor jazz a little too slick for my modest hovel, but Stephane Grappelli lends an air of bonhomie, and the big band charts on a few cuts are pleasantly reminiscent of '50s West Coast cool.

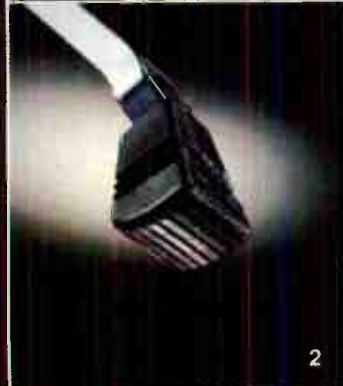
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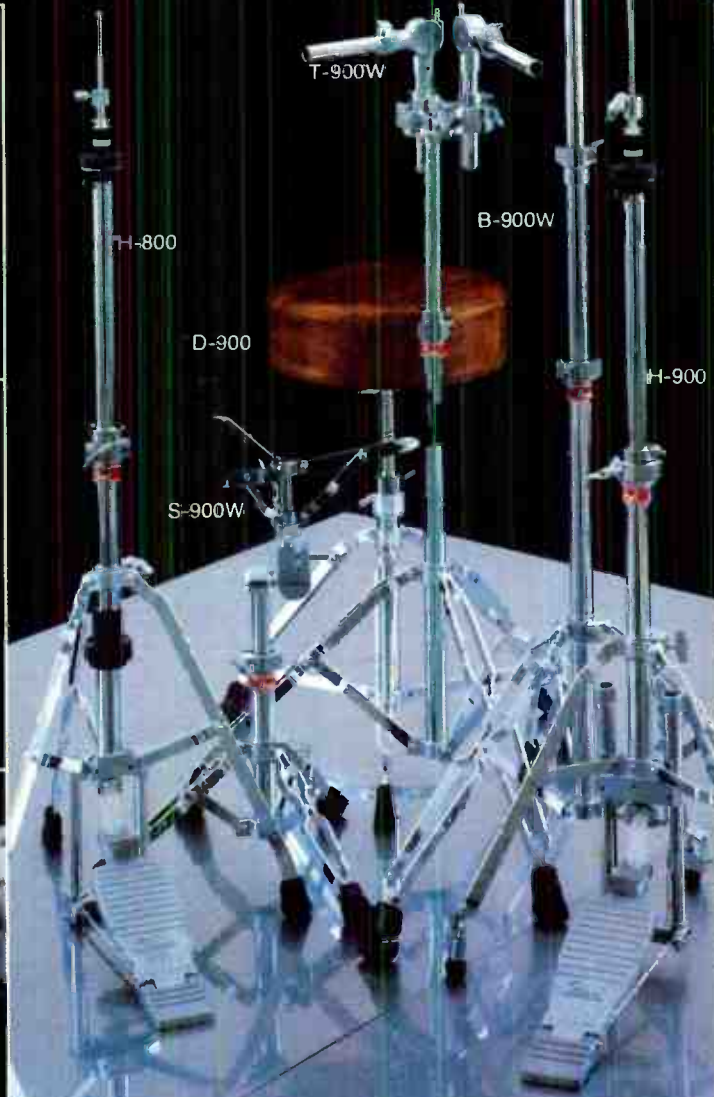
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**Muddy Waters** from pg. 106 because an archivist had shown me what he thought was the only copy of this same picture; he kept it locked up in a bank vault. "You see, man? You see?" said Muddy excitedly, with a proud, almost proprietary expression on his face. "Didn't I tell you? Isn't that something?"

That's the way I like to remember Muddy, a proud man wary of the world but full of enthusiasm and fire. His experience was almost that of an immigrant coming to a foreign land. Without education, without encouragement, without anything but his own character and resources, he succeeded in a new world and learned to enjoy it without ever giv-

ing up his fierce independence or attachment to the past. In the garden of his suburban home in Westmont, outside of Chicago, he would always point out proudly to a visitor his cabbage, his greens, his okra. If you asked him if he was satisfied with his success he would answer, "I'm sorry that the world didn't know me before they did. Because I think I worked hard enough for them to know me. I worked very, very hard to get where I am. And it just looked like I was late getting to the point where mostly the whole world knew something about me. They could have come around a lot earlier, you know—when I was younger and could put out more." ☐

**Rock Shorts** from pg. 110 the Rolling Stones). This compilation is worth having just for comparisons—all of which, by the way, favor Alexander—but the other selections are equally fascinating, and ought to do much to restore an almost forgotten reputation.

**The Belle Stars** — *The Belle Stars* (Warner Bros./Stiff) This all-female septet, which in an earlier incarnation was the ska group the Bodysnatchers, tries to appeal to the Go-Go's/Bananarama audience without managing the melodic appeal or charm of either. At least they do "The Clapping Song" better than Pia Zadora.

**Champaign** — *Modern Heart* (Columbia) Soul harmony doesn't come any sweeter than this these days. Unlike Ray, Goodman & Brown, who go for the smoothest blend, or the Whispers, who pay more attention to the groove, Champaign goes for the song every time, and when their material is as strong as "Try Again" or "International Feel," their efforts are returned with interest.

**Bruce Baxter** — *Middle Of The Night* (Landslide) Baxter has produced sides for such Athens, Ga. popsters as the B-52s, Pylon, the Brains and Love Tractor, but surprisingly, his own material is far less concerned with rhythmic or melodic quirks than with slick efficiency. That adds a bit of blandness to the weaker tunes here, but when Baxter hits a winner, like "The Man Done Come" or "Wrong Is Right," you're treated to what must be the Steely Dan of the New South. (Landslide, 450 14th St., Suite 201, N.W., Atlanta GA 30318)

**One Plus One** — *One Plus One* (Aarson) This New Jersey duo checks in with a synthesized version of "Time Has Come Today" that trumps the Ramones' and continues from there to demonstrate how garage band rock can best survive the synthesizer boom. The writing on this EP may be overly derivative, but the performances are heartfelt and to-the-point. Worth writing away for. (Aarson Records, 764 Columbus Ave., NYC, 10025)

**Fonzi Thornton** — *The Leader* (RCA) Although this session singer's step into the spotlight isn't quite as hot as Luther Vandross' 1981 debut, it's not too far off. Thornton knows how to get the most from his material, whether a lazy funk remake of "Be My Baby" or his own, taut "(Uh-Oh) There Goes My Heart." But splitting the rhythm tracks between Kashif, Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards and Nat Adderley Jr. leaves *The Leader* without a clear course to follow, and it eventually loses the listener.

**Leo Kottke** — *Time Step* (Chrysalis) Leo Kottke sings! For real this time! With a voice as basso smooth as Johnny Cash's, and with the same laid-back wit as his guitar playing! Which is also well-represented here! So don't just stand there! Get a copy, and hear for yourself! Jeez! ☐

## PICK HITS

**DAVID FRICKE: Hot: R.E.M.** — *Murmur* (I.R.S.); **Talking Heads** — *Speaking In Tongues* (Sire); **Midnight Oil** — *10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1* (CBS Australia); **the Residents** — *The Mole Show, Live At The Roxy* (Ralph limited edition); **Thumbs** — *No Price On Earth* (Ramona); **Cold: Dave Edmunds** — *Information* (Columbia); **Live: R.E.M.**, Maxwell's, Hoboken, New Jersey.

**J.D. CONSIDINE: Hot: Oxo** — "Whirly Girl" (Geffen); **Steve Arrington's Hall of Fame** — *1* (Atlantic); **XTC** — *Mummer* (Virgin/Epic); **David Holland** — *Life Cycle* (ECM); **Violent Femmes** — *Violent Femmes* (Slash/Warner Bros.); **Cold: Laura Branigan** — *Branigan 2* (Atlantic); **Live: U2**, Ritchie Coliseum, College Park, Maryland.

**ROY TRAKIN: Hot: David Bowie** — *Let's Dance* (EMI/America); **Eddy Grant** — *Killer On The Rampage* (Portrait); **New Edition** — "Candy Girl" (Streetwise 12-inch); **the Call** — "When The Wall Came Down" (Mercury); **Jackie Wilson** — *The Jackie Wilson Story* (Epic); **Cold: the Divinyls** — *Desperate* (Chrysalis); **Live: the Feelies**, the Peanut Gallery, Haledon, New Jersey.

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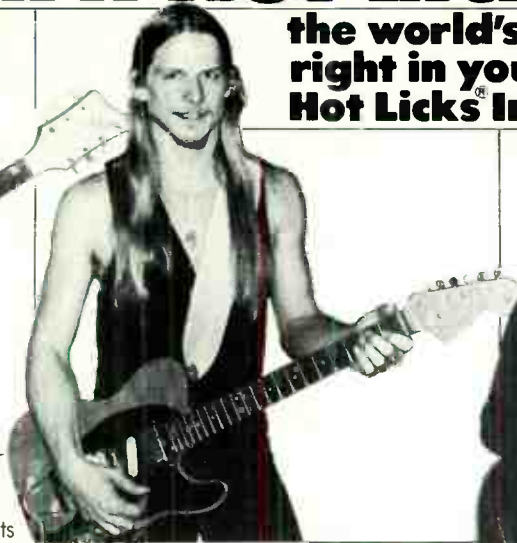
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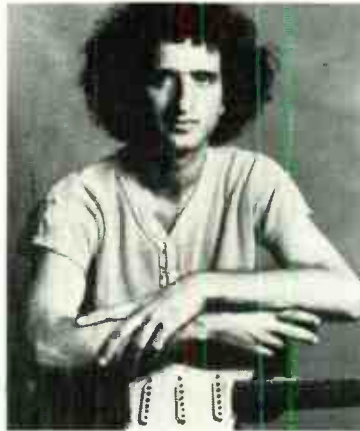
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**Boyd** from page 92

not to distort the sound but to give it texture, to enrich it more.

The one thing I remember about the previous album, *The 5000 Spirits*, was one point where Mike's voice, the harmony he sings behind Robin, suddenly pans from one side to the center and across to the other and back. I hated that. I was so upset at letting them do that. To me, the point of engineering is so you don't notice it's been engineered. The worst thing you can do is give someone a mental picture of somebody turning a dial or pushing a fader. Unless you're Brian Wilson, maybe.

*Fairport Convention*—Liege And Lief (A&M, 1969)

*The English folk-rock breakthrough. The combination of Sandy Denny's husky vocal drama, Richard Thompson's artful guitar punch, violinist Dave Swarbrick's spiral solos and the hard rock anchor of the rhythm section completely reinvented several hundred years of tradition. "As much as I loved traditional music, to me there was not much challenge in just recording something so straightforward, that had such a clear audience and clear intention," says Boyd of his original folk-rock vision, summing up as well that of the Fairports and his other Witch-season artists. "I was very attracted to the idea of upsetting it and shaking it up."*

**Boyd:** I believe *Liege And Lief* was the first record done on 8-track at Sound Techniques. The album does have a live feel to it; I always pushed Richard (Thompson) to do his guitar solos live if possible. But on hearing that record again, I was a little taken aback because it isn't as good as I remember it. There are three or four really excellent tracks, like the adaptations of "Matty Groves" and "Tam Lin," but there are also some very mediocre tracks, songs that represent a kind of incomplete transition, still in the pop song mode but applied to their new-found religion of folk music. Whereas the fluidity and natural energy of "Tam Lin" represent the record's real importance, the direction things would take.

One of the key elements of that sound was Ashley Hutchings' bass lines. It was a whole new way of playing bass. He and Richard, I think, invented these very baroque, complicated bass parts which were a whole countermelody to everything else that was going on, underpinning the whole song, holding it together and giving it a real intensity. Without those bass lines, I don't know if the songs would have had the same impact.

Another thing that absolutely transformed those songs was Dave Mattacks' drumming. He was a great technical drummer who'd worked with strict tempo bands. I also remember that at the time a very influential record was *Music From Big Pink* by the Band. The group really wanted a flat dead drum sound, just like

Levon Helm, and there were a lot of arguments with John Wood about it. That's one reason why there's not a lot of top end on that record; everybody hated anything that sounded like a bright crisp pop drum sound. The dark coloring also came from Dave Swarbrick's fiddle, because when he wasn't playing solos, he tended to play rhythms down on the instrument, which is low-sounding anyway.

*Nick Drake*—Five Leaves Left (Island U.K., '69), *Bryter Layter* (Island U.K., '70)

*Dead of a drug overdose at age twenty-six, English singer-songwriter Nick Drake never realized the commercial success and wide public acclaim Joe Boyd had always predicted for him. Yet out of his painful shyness and debilitating bouts of intense depression, Drake fashioned three hauntingly beautiful, dramatically chilling albums. These first two are often compared to Van Morrison's Astral Weeks for their quiet confessional urgency and magical fusion of folk gentility, baroque atmosphere and jazzy mystery. Boyd and John Wood both agree that Bryter Layter is the one perfect album they have ever made.*

**Boyd:** What is true with most of my records is even more true of that record. It was very satisfying to me, knowing that we had such extraordinary music down on the multi-track (with glowing contributions from Richard Thompson, Dave Mattacks, John Cale and South African pianist Chris McGregor). But I've never taken such care mixing a record as I did with *Bryter Layter*. John and I mixed those tracks each three or four times, ten hours a mix, because we loved the album. We were determined to get it right.

I have a very subjective attitude towards mixing. When John and I did a mix, I would leave the room and he would set up the individual sounds and set the echo. Then I'd come in, he'd leave, and I'd set my own balances. He'd come back and say "Oh, no, that's rubbish, you shouldn't have done that." We'd argue back and forth and from that a synthesis would emerge.

One thing we did with the strings on *Bryter Layter* was record them with a close mike but also have a couple of boom mikes in the room and put the echo just on the boom mikes. So we could have a very intimate sound coming off the strings themselves and then exaggerate the room sound through the echo on the boom mikes.

*Richard & Linda Thompson*—Shoot Out The Lights (Hannibal, 1982)

*After he sold Witchseason Productions to Island's Chris Blackwell in 1971, Boyd took a position with Warner Bros., producing Nico's Desert Shore, Maria Muldaur's hit solo debut, albums by Kate & Anna McGarrigle and the 1973 movie Jimi Hendrix. But when he decided to*

*enter the independent label business with Hannibal in 1981, among Boyd's highest priorities was signing and producing old Fairport client Richard Thompson. A critics' favorite of last year, this album is one of Thompson and Boyd's best, a record of frank gripping lyricism (underlined by Richard and Linda's imminent separation) and extraordinary Thompson guitar work produced with the same desperate urgency with which it was performed. At this writing, a new Thompson album produced by Boyd is about to be released.*

**Boyd:** I had gone to hear Richard and his band—just a basic group with Simon Nicol on guitar and Dave Mattacks on drums, very simple—and it was a revelation to hear him alone. There's a texture Richard creates just by bending a string. So it was clear what we had to do. I said, "We go into the studio and do it all live, including the guitar solos. We'll make a rock record, guitar to the forefront with no other instruments except Simon to sort of clear out the space for the solos." And we did it in three days. We didn't use much in the way of effects either, no delays or harmonizers or digital echoes. We might have overdone it a bit with the noise gates on the drums, though.

But the most important thing about that record is that it's not technical at all. It was a bunch of people in the studio having a good time playing together again. They played stuff they liked with people they liked. It was just "let's do the take and get right on to the next one." It was one of the easiest records I've ever made, and I knew it would be. To be as good as it is, it had to be. ☐

#### A Short Gear Discourse

For someone who insists he is not a technician, Joe Boyd has distinct equipment tastes. "My favorite mixing board," for example, "is a Neve, any Neve. I like the way it's set up, the logic of the board, its eq, the way it feels, the way it looks and the way things end up sounding. It tends to shape sound in a certain way that I like." Boyd is also a fan of Urei Timeline speakers "because they are brutal, cruel and naked. They make things sound the way they are, only worse, and if things sound good on that, you know they'll sound okay on record. The last thing you want in mixing and recording is a flattering monitor."

He has a preference for Universal limiters, old RCA ribbon microphones (although he also likes more contemporary Neumanns) and just about anything with tubes. "And I like real live rooms, rooms that are actually eccentric and have their own sound, in buildings made of stone and brick and wood. Your padded modern rock 'n' roll studio is not good for the kind of records I like to make."

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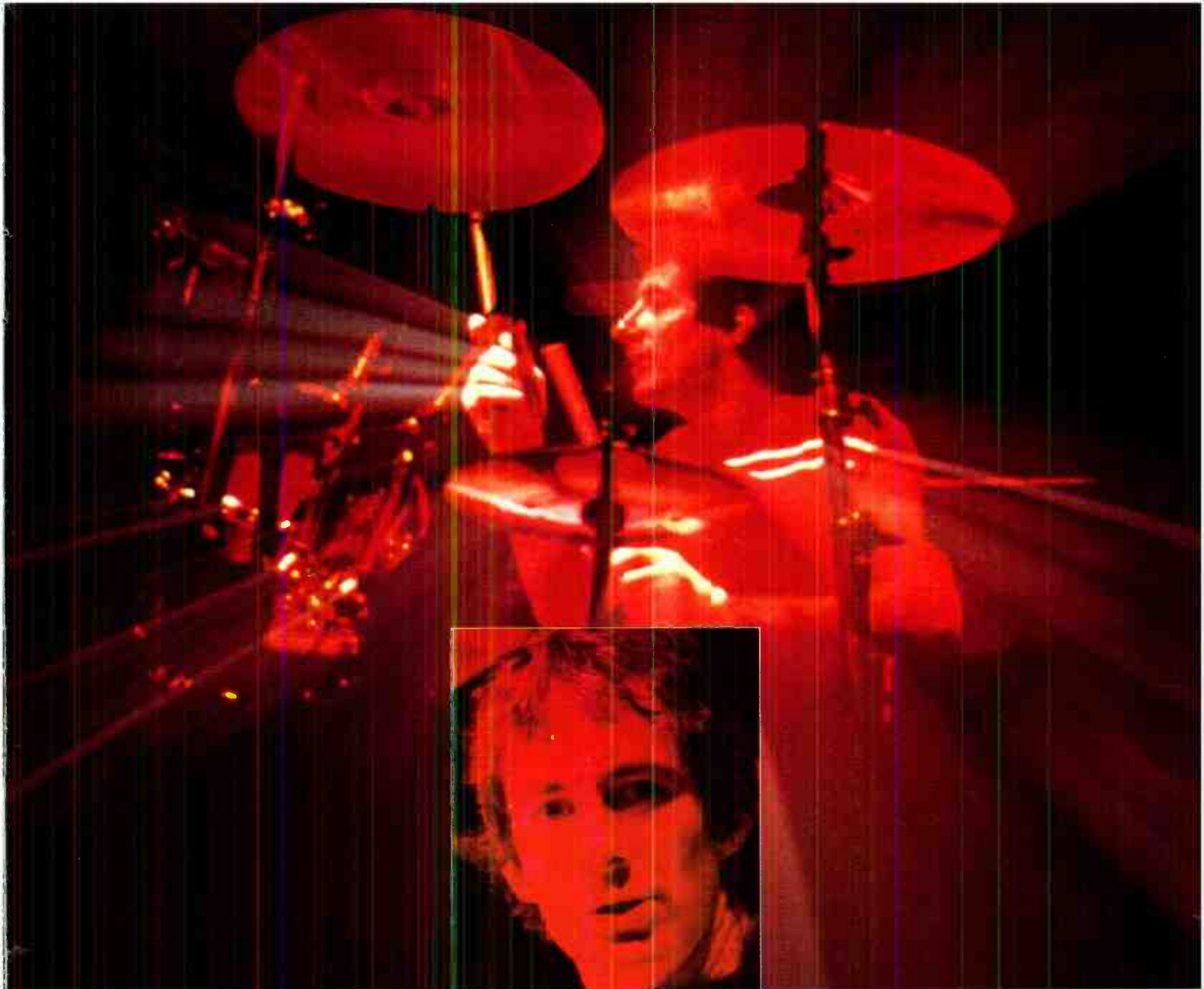
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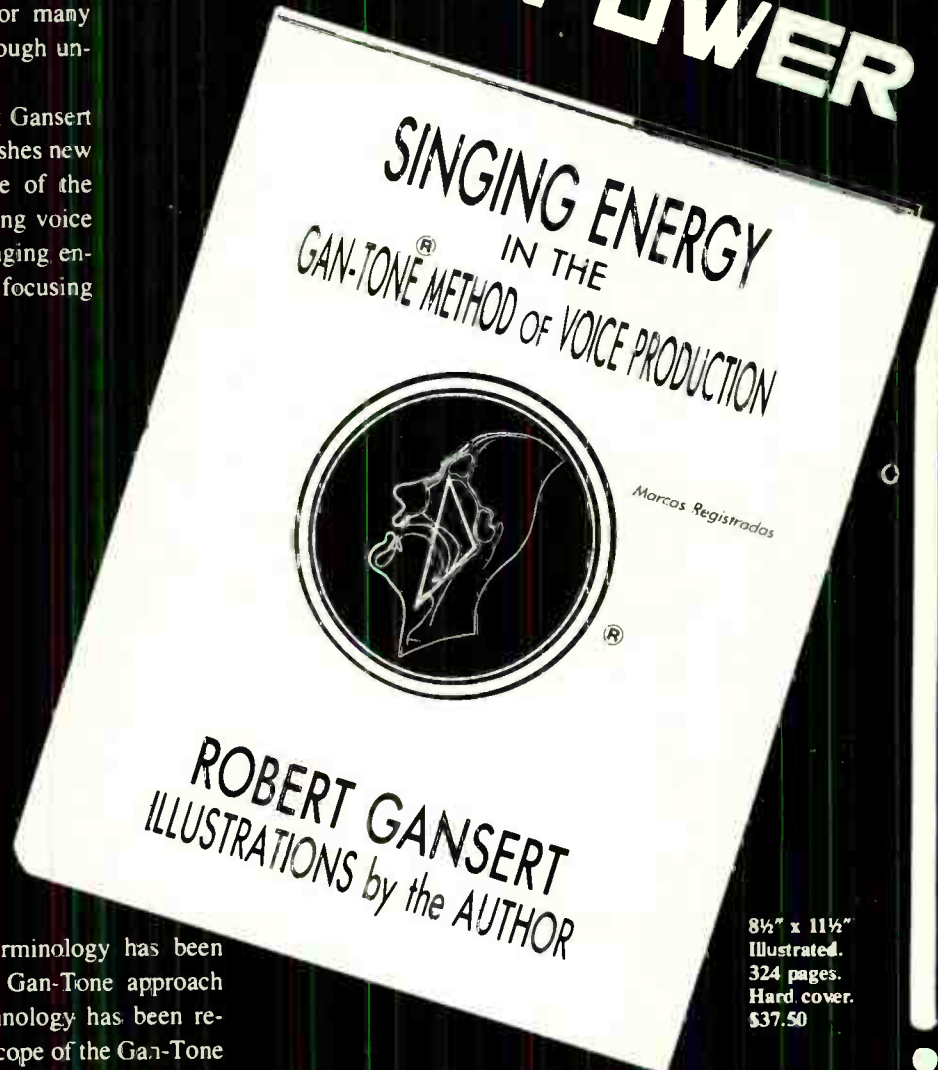
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**Marley** from pg. 64

degrees of righteousness, the order of their spiritual houses.

"Dere be a jing-bang (noisy) balmyard (where the myalman ministers to his flock) and a crowded church dis Sabbath," Omeriah mused to himself, drawing deeply from his "fronto" (tobacco) pipe.

The air was electric with tension. Surveying the group with hooded eyes, one of the young men, a cobbler from the village of Endeavor, finally made a diffident joke about the blackheart man, and everyone responded with grateful guffaws. A woman had just begun offering a riddle when she was interrupted by an outburst from Nesta.

"Mumma! Mumma seh! Wha' de blackheart mon?"

"Hush, me pickney! Hold yar tongue or tek yar rest!"

"Nuh, Ciddy," said the cobbler with a rascal's twinkle, "de bwai mus' know fe blackheart mon if 'e shud meet 'im by da moon."

Before Cedella could protest, the cobbler had launched into a description of the blackheart man that had Nesta's eyes as wide as johnnycakes and every other child clutching his or her parents' skirts and pantlegs.

The blackheart mon lives in perpetual darkness, he began. He carries night with him like a robe draped about his head. And such a head! Flowing from it are tangled snake-finger locks, coiled about like the hissing, viperous mane of Medusa. The blackheart mon has no friends, no home, no family. A stranger to all, he lives in the "gullies" (open drains) of the city and the lonely hollows of the country, enticing with candies and fair words all children who dare to stray from their mothers or who stay out alone past sundown. He takes them away, never to see their kin again. He consumes them, limb by limb, or presents them to Satan as slaves, doomed to work forever at brimstone-stoked furnaces on the charred banks of the River Styx—the lifeless watercourse that encircles Hell.

"Tikya (take care) de blackheart mon, children, me seh don' go near 'im," the cobbler admonished. "Tikya de blackheart mon, fe evan lions fear 'im!"

"Nuh, Mumma! Nuh wan' see de blackheart mon!" Nesta yelped.

"Hush, chile! An' shame on yuh, mon!" seethed Ciddy. "Scare my pickney so! Dere is nuh such a mon as de blackheart mon, chile!"

"Ahhh, but dere is," shouted another cousin in the crowd. "'Im de cursed Rastamon. Lazy, shif'less, dangerous madmon, dem, who wan' mosh up de nation. Dey spit in de face of de Almighty, dem trash!"

De Rastamon. Nesta was too stunned to speak. Several weeks ago he had seen a willowy man with long ropy hair—hair like a serpent's nest. The man came strolling out of the woods near Stepney School, toting a "bankra" (basket) of yams. Seeing him, several of the other children had abandoned their roadside game, hurrying toward the schoolhouse in a fuss, and Miss Isaacs had summoned the rest indoors, standing watch until the man was gone.

Just as the door was being shut behind him, Nesta had glanced back to see the Rastamon smiling, his teeth as white as a tiger's, his shiny, bulging eyes fixed directly on him....

"Nuh, Mumma! Nuh, Mumma! Me nuh wan' ta see de blackheart mon!"

Ciddy shook the boy awake. Through his tears, he saw he was home again, safe in his straw bed in the hilltop shack. His mother had carried him back in her arms, just before first light.

"Hush, my love. Yuh jus' dream bad. Sleep nice."

Exhausted, the young woman groped her way back to her dry grass pallet and stretched herself out upon it, drifting into a blank slumber.

Propping himself upon his own brittle mattress, Nesta peeked through the weather-warped shutters into the eddied realm of mist beyond the shack—and he screamed.

Maybe he saw something. Maybe he didn't. But he flew into his mother's bed and hid his eyes under his sleeping gown, shivering, until sleep claimed him once more. ☐

## THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Bob Marley's Seven Best Tracks

BY TIMOTHY WHITE

**"Judge Not"**—Marley's first single, a solo effort written and then cut in late 1961-early 1962 and later released in England in 1963 on the Island label (under the misnomer Bob Morley) is a remarkably confident ska record. A pleasantly unhurried sax (offset by a tin whistle!) threads its way through the pumping shufflebeat as the teenage Bob offers a stern admonishment to those too quick to denounce rude boys, and by the second stanza, his strong, reedy delivery and precocious manner command your attention: "The road of life is rocky/And you may stumble too/So while you talk about me/Someone else is judging you!"

**"Screwface"**—Released in 1972 in the U.K. on the Punch label, it was originally issued in Jamaica on the Wail 'M' Soul 'M' / Tuff Gong labels. A sinuous horn intro and great falsetto harmonies by Bob and Bunny steer the ominous stalk-tempo smack into Bob's fervent lead vocal: "They say, 'Coward man keep sound bone/And all violent men gonna weep and moan!/He that exalted himself shall be debased!/Remember Jah-Jah children, don't dread Screwface!' The rural church maxim that Beelzebub and his duppy confederates cannot harm those who have no fear of them is adapted for Rasta brethren to stunning effect as Marley boldly adds, "No, even the Pestilence that crawleth by night can do me no harm!" As a cified adult dread, Bob was often ingenious at bending to his favor the wraithy fears and fables of his youth in the bush, using time-honored Jamaican country imagery as a vehicle for his Jahful vision.

**"Smile Jamaica"**—The 1976 Tuff Gong single that was meant to help drum up support for the People's National Party-sponsored pre-elections show seems almost ghoulishly ironic now, since the Jamaican airwaves it was designed to dominate that December were soon filled instead with the grim news of the assassination attempt that caused a wounded Bob to flee the island. While the A-side of the record is rather languid, with drummer Carly Barrett a trifle sluggish on the one-drop, the B-side is a sprightly re-do in the rockers *Mili-Tant* style then coming into favor. The interplay between Marley and the I-Threes has rarely been more sensual and Bob does some utterly inspired "skee-ba-da" skatting (one of his greatest, often-overlooked gifts) that simply must be heard to be believed.

**"Chant Down Babylon"**—A standout on the *Confrontation* LP, it was written in the Sheraton Hotel in Brussels during the 1979 *Survival* Tour. Originally titled "I Believe In Reggae Music," it was subsequently cut as "Come, We Go Burn Down Babylon (One More Time)." The *Confrontation* track is as magnificently soulful and exhilarating as the first go-around was incendiary. Working in the studio, Marley often transformed his battle cries into love songs and vice-versa, and he sometimes was quite contemplative about the particular treatments he might choose to issue, often basing his decision on the current socio-political climate in Jamaica. To give another example, the demo of "Buffalo Soldier" that Bob first cut with King Sporty's band in 1978 is so buoyant, one almost misses the song's dark message.

**"Could You Be Loved"**—The 1979 twelve-inch put out in England just before the release of the *Uprising* album is one of the great dance records of all time. The one-string quiver/trill that clicks into the talking drum-accented opening chorus is sublime, and the piping-hot highhat sticking and tinkling keyboard touches create a magnetic tapestry that is actually so simple in terms of its components—once you listen closely—it's uncanny.

**"Trenchtown Rock"**—(on the *Live!* LP) From the tumultuous reaction of the Lyceum crowd at the opening introduction, to the tensile surge of the raw reggae that meets it more than halfway, this portion of the July, 1975 London concert is a mighty slice of live Wailers' magic, with Bob's crackling vocal performance among the best available on record.

**"Redemption Song"**—Bob wrote both this and "Coming In From The Cold" over-night to flesh out the *Uprising* LP. Like all great folk anthems of liberation, it's rich with the flinty energy of enduring against awesome and terrible odds. It's not reggae, but it's plenty powerful. And haunting. When this track initially surfaced, a lot of people took to referring to Marley as "the black Dylan." Funny, I always thought of the "other" Bob as "the white Marley."



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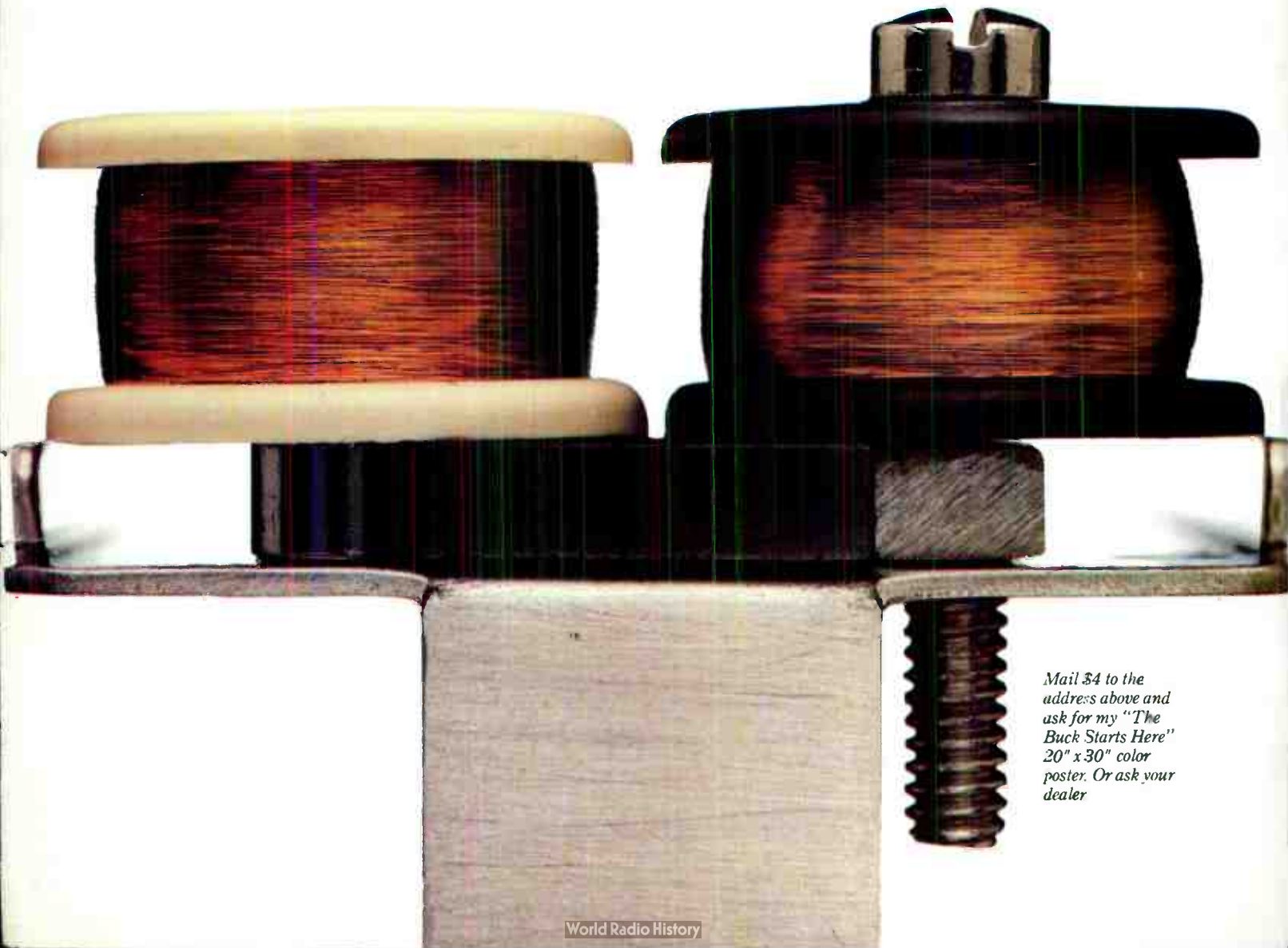
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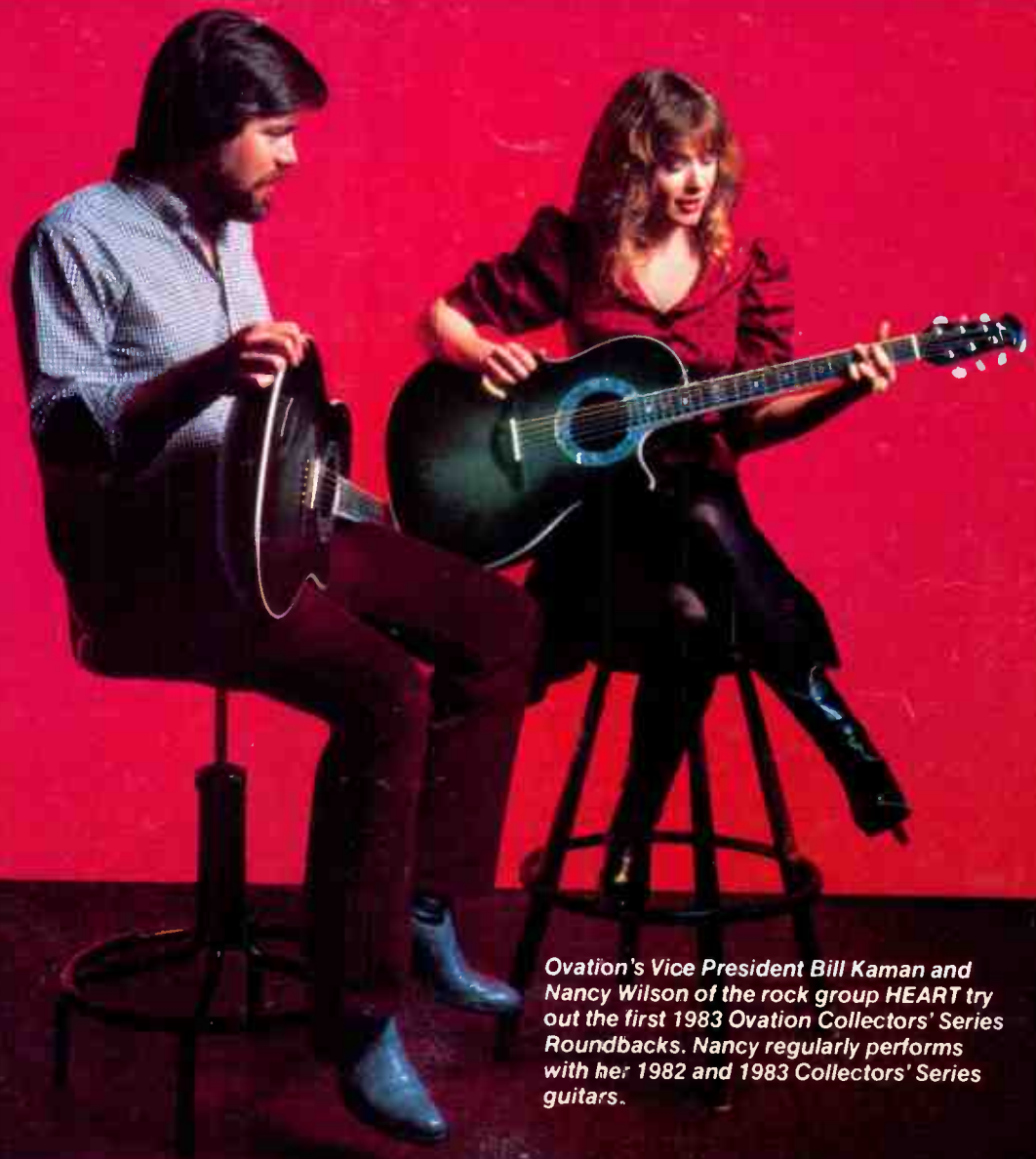
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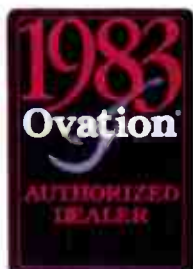
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