U2 INTERVIEW

J. GEILS BAND • AL JARREAU • BERNIE WORRELL

MUSICIAN

$2.25 NO. 75 JANUARY 1985

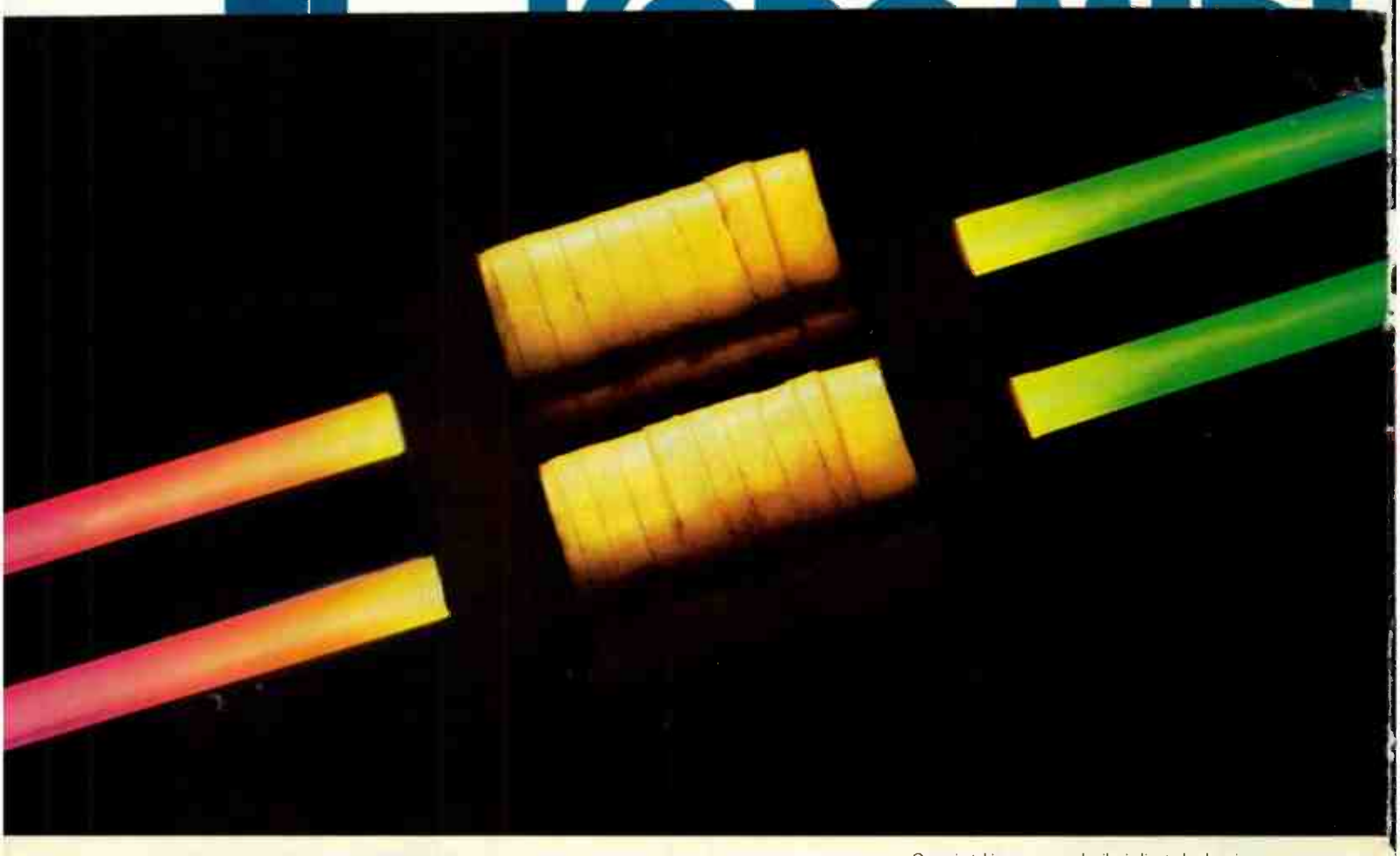
VAN MORRISON
Reluctant Soul Hero

KEYBOARD AGE
Herbie Hancock, Heaven 17, Synth Trends

CULTURE CLUB

U2
Passion Players Catch Fire

By Bill Flanagan



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JANUARY 1985 NO. 75

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MUSICIAN

U2

A new generation of Irish soul, with evangelical pride and passion.

By Bill Flanagan 38

CULTURE CLUB

Yes, he's Irish, and sure he's got soul; Boy George O'Dowd & his smooth vanilla fudge.

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Michelle Nicastro
Administration
Paula Amato
Main Office/Production/Retail Sales
31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701
Gloucester, MA 01930 (617) 281-3110
New York Advertising/Editorial
MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.
NY.C., NY 10036 (212) 764-7400
Group Publisher
Gerald S. Hobbs
Circulation Manager
Barbara Eskin
Subscriber Service
Gregory Thompson (212) 764-7536

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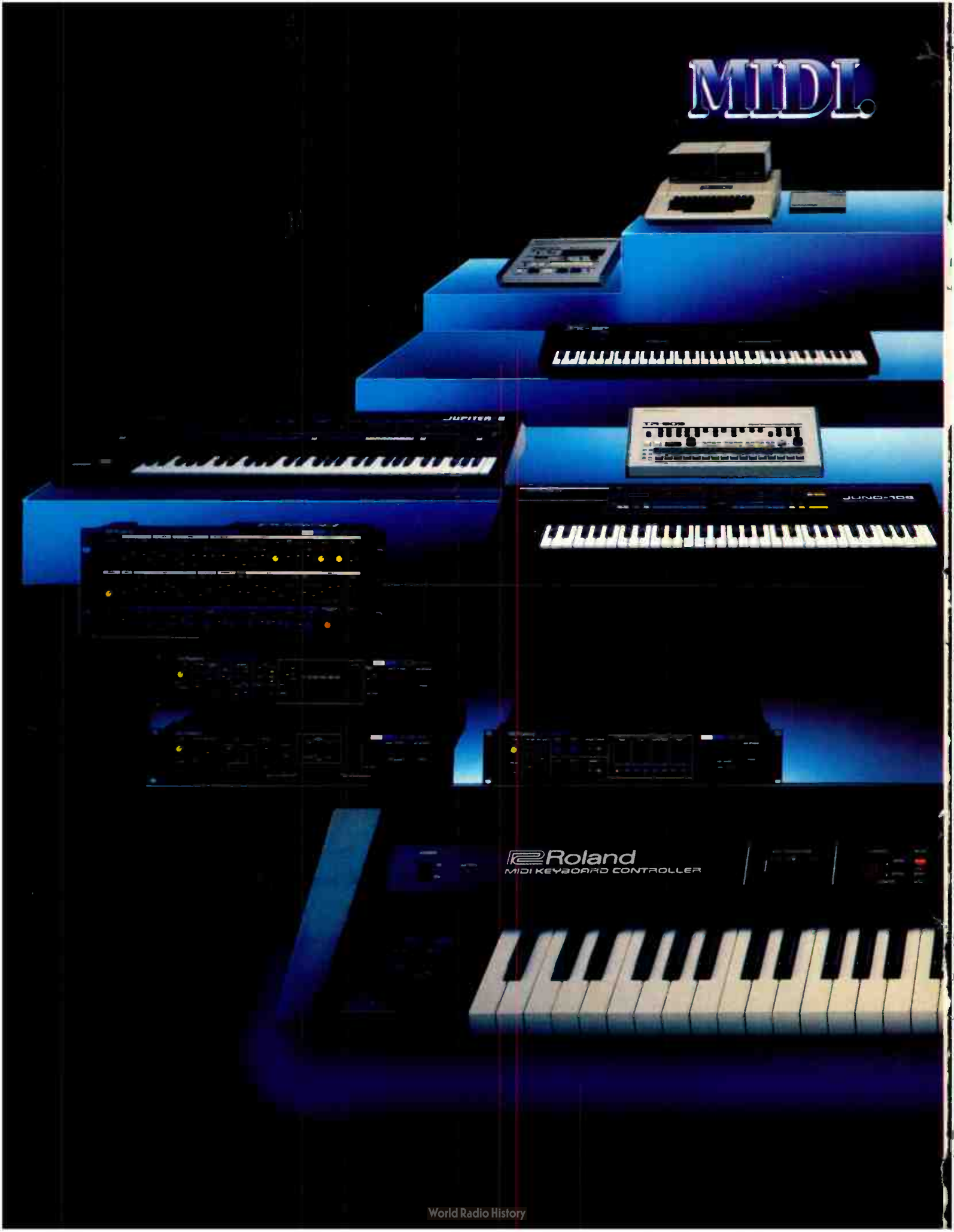

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Purple Praise

Mother Nature gave birth to the four apostles: Ra, Hendrix, Stone and Clinton, to preserve all funkiness of man until eternity, by spreading funkacidal vibrations across the universe. However, when George grew a nose and fell into the bottomless pit of jivation, Mother Nature was not going to leave us alone. She gave us a fifth apostle: Prince. Funk will never die!

Al Keaton
Norristown, PA

Today I received both *Musician* and *Rolling Stone* in the mail. With the latter, I was sufficiently bored with fiction, whether or not John Belushi is sleeping well, and a rather nauseating "hail heavy metal" section. In *Musician*, I read the only good article on Prince I have ever seen. Is it surprising that after five minutes *Rolling Stone* was in the trash with the peach pit? No. Is it surprising that I pore over each *Musician* until the next comes? No. Is it surprising I'm ditching *Rolling Stone* for *Musician*? You got it...NO!

Polly Shaw
Cazenovia, NY

Mr. Isler's comparison of Prince to Bruce Springsteen and Jimi Hendrix has one major flaw: they are men, and the so-called Prince is nothing short of a Princess. It appears to me that Mr. Nelson's fame comes purely from the fact that those too "sophisticated" to praise Michael Jackson still need some kind of schlock rock to dance to, and Prince is *their* Michael Jackson. And to me, he is as equally nauseating.

Andrew Schwartz
Warren, NJ

Why the blurry, out-of-focus cover shot?

Christopher Richardson
Cincinnati, OH

Have you had your eyes checked recently?

I enjoyed your recent article on Prince (October, 1984). However, you reported Prince Rogers Nelson as being born on June 7, 1960. I also read a report on Prince in *Rolling Stone* that named the birthdate as June 7, 1958.

In support of *Rolling Stone*'s 1958 date, the author also reported that Owen Husney, Prince's first manager, trimmed two years off Prince's age.

Could it be *Musician* may have printed old information?

Nick Gault
Columbus, MS

But he has such a youthful face.

I thought *Rolling Stone*'s cover story on Prince was well-written until I read Scott Isler's. I was stunned that he didn't harp on the meaningless, show-biz hype or teen fanzine material that the overwhelming majority of magazines have. "Prince in Exile" didn't leave me feeling viscerally disgusted with Hollywood hype—there's been a change. You've taken part in creating a vision, and I've felt the rain.

Autumn Williamson
Brooklyn, NY

Your article on Prince has helped me gain much insight on this reclusive and often contradictory man. His personified sex image is successful because of the "goods" he delivers, along with his flamboyant stage performances and blatant lyrics. It would appear his music is an outlet for all of his confusion and dreams; a way of explaining to himself and others what has happened in his life and what he wants of it now, perhaps the need to be accepted and loved.

Prince is not in my opinion selling out on his own uniqueness and individuality to gain wider fame and public recognition. His adeptness in soul and funk, and lately his crossover to pop and rock, display his versatile talents and bring black and white music closer together. I hope his invitation to party is open till at least 1999.

Susan Natale
Conshohocken, PA

Out of the Freying Pan...

Jock Baird's interview with Glenn Frey jingled like a welcome alarm clock. This might have much to do with the subject himself, but at least Baird had the sense to let Frey run the show. And a bonafide interview! Gee whiz. After Michael and Prince, I had come to believe there was only reworked commentary in the world!

If I bought Glenn Frey a shiny purple coat, got him a movie deal and a duet with Michael Jackson, maybe, just maybe, he'd be of sufficient commercial merit to make the cover.

Elizabeth Hanson
New York, NY

Not two hours before it arrived I was telling a friend how terrific your magazine is: informative, filled with researched articles, etc. Then you tell me that Glenn Frey sang lead on "One Of These Nights."

Jock, go straight to your turntable and listen again. That's Don Henley's voice! Getcher ears on. (It doesn't change a thing, the magazine is still terrific.)

Bob Ohsiek
Escondido, CA

Hot Rod

It's good to see an optimistic article on the abilities of Rod Stewart. I get so weary of critics tearing a perfectly able performer to pieces. I wonder how many of these comparatively unskilled pessimists secretly wish that their mental, physical, musical and imaginative abilities equaled those of Stewart's?

Bill Edgerton
Florence, SC

Josef Woodard transcribed Rod Stewart's early Bob Dylan favorite as "The Cost Of Sorrow." That *would* be intriguing from Bob, but the correct title was "(Man Of) Constant Sorrow." Otherwise a fine interview in the best all-around music mag.

David Gitin
Monterey, CA

Smilin' Stevie

You have just won my approval for another great year of *Musician*. Little Steven should have been cover material, but having the guts to publish my main man has planted a permanent smile on my face.

Bruce Sterry
Buffalo, NY

Reaction: Irascible

I am appalled at the unprofessionalism shown in October's Rock Short Takes. Though I had not found Quiet Riot's *Condition Critical* to be one of the all-time metal classics, I would never have expected a two-word review. That Quiet Riot's first album is one of the best-selling debut albums ever, is reason enough for a thorough review of their followup. Your readers expect more.

Rob Myers
Lewiston, ME

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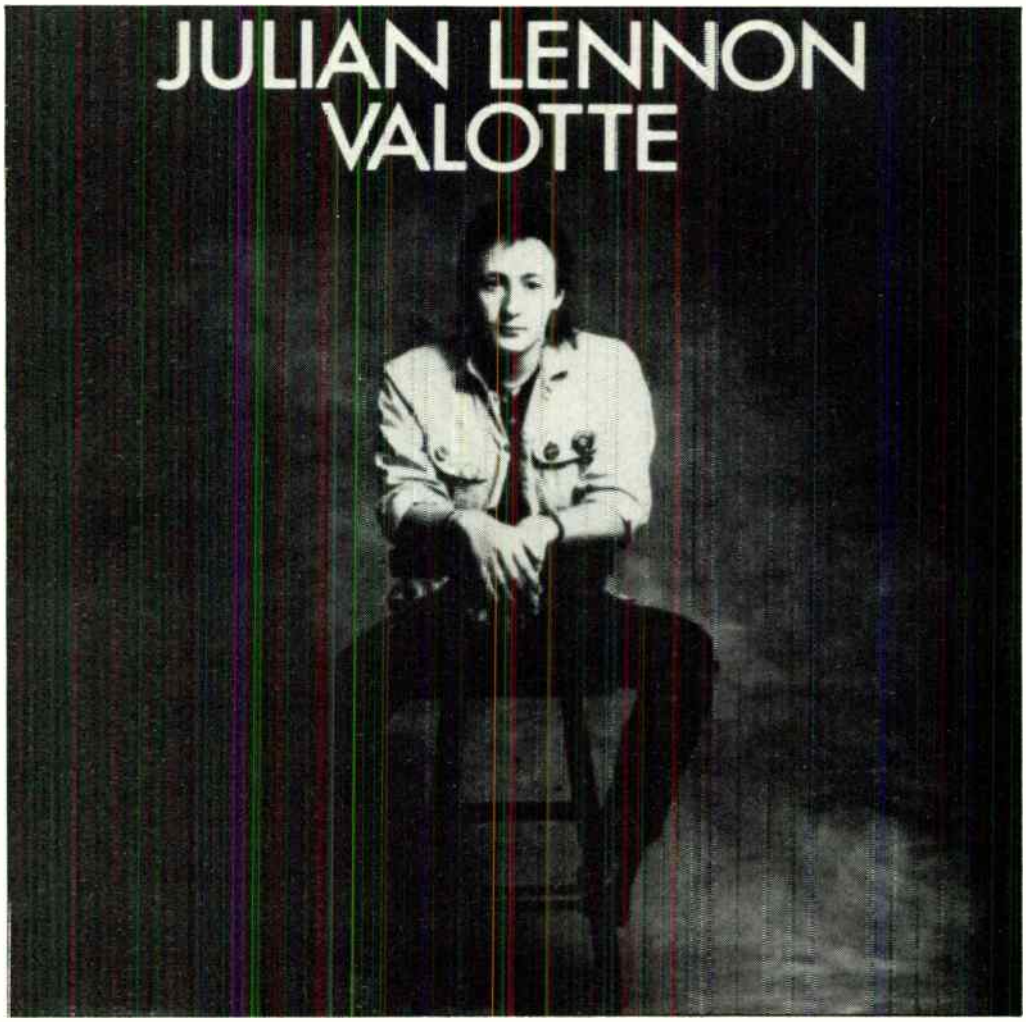

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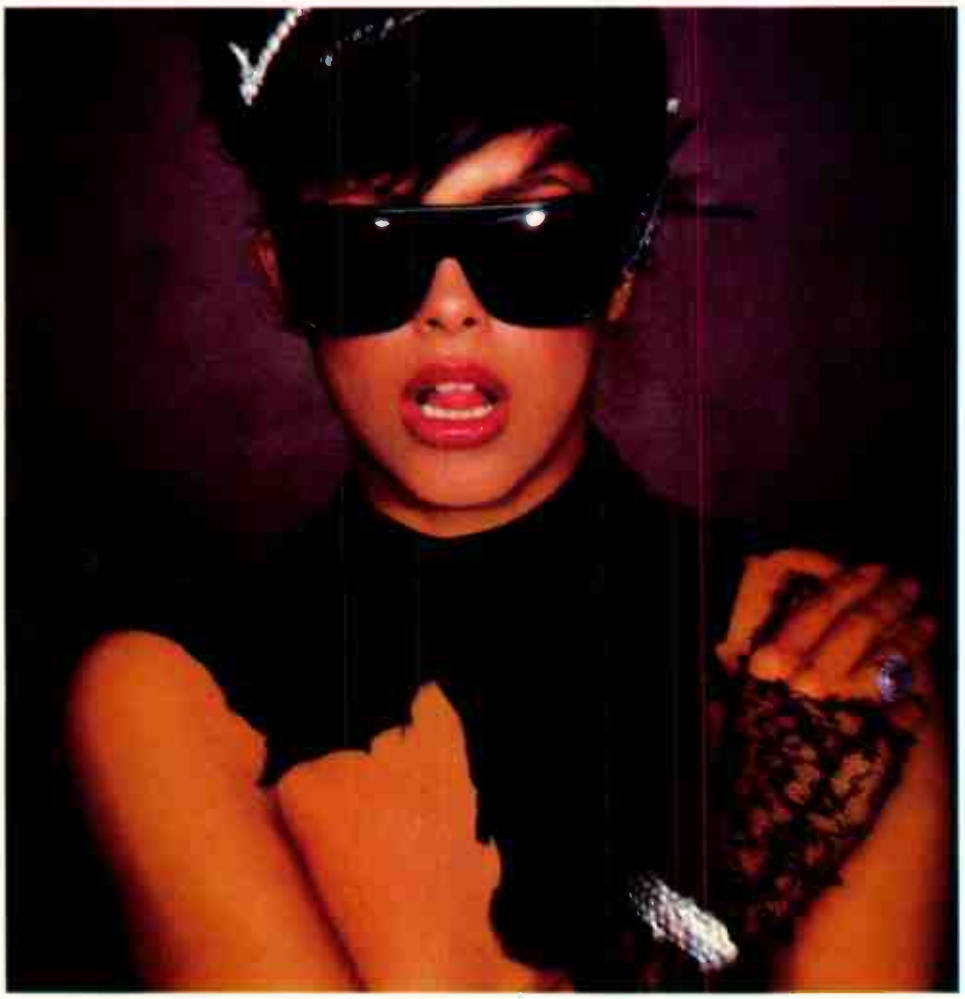


VANITY

Without Love, It Ain't Much

On Prince's "1999" tour, **Vanity** was the show's onstage answer to the Victoria's Secret catalog—a self-described "nasty girl" who sang a little, wiggled a lot, and murmured memorable lines like "I need at least seven inches....Get it up, get it up." No surprise, then, when she showed up on the cover of *Rolling Stone* hanging over the shoulder of boyfriend Prince, her hand slipped suggestively beneath the waistband of his jeans.

But when *Purple Rain* went into production, the part of Prince's girlfriend was suddenly up for grabs. Where was Vanity? Headed for Motown and her own movie deal. The common inference was that the business split followed a personal split. What happened?

"I was supposed to do the part," she says of *Purple Rain*. "I didn't do it because...." Her deep, brown eyes gaze across the room. "I've wanted a solo career for a long time, and I thought it would be best—more tactful—to leave the group beforehand rather than do the film and then say goodbye. I have no regrets; how can I?

"I was with Prince because he was great. Period. People talk about competition between this girl and that girl. I don't look at it that way. I am my own competition. I'm quite an ambitious woman."

Vanity's solo album, *Wild Animal*, is a droll romp through a fantasyland packed with double- and single-entendres. Unlike the cartoon come-ons of *Vanity 6*, though, *Wild Animal* seems to reflect real life.

"You always write about people you loved," Vanity admits with hesitation. "I loved Prince a lot. He writes about me, and I surely do write about him."

Her single "Pretty Mess" is doing remarkably well for a song about semen stains, but Vanity worries about what's next on her social agenda. "I hope to fall in love, and fall out of love, so I can make another great album," she says, half joking.

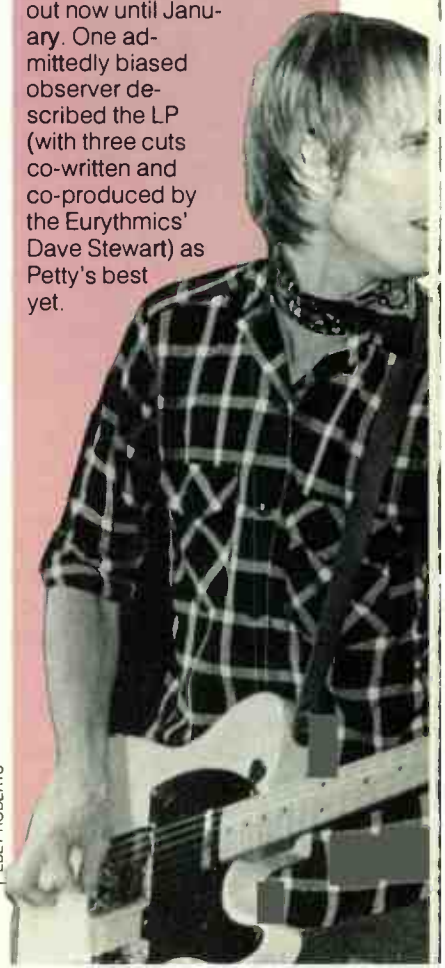
As somebody else's song about the glamorous life observes, without love, it ain't much. – **J.D. Considine**

Will Tom Petty Ever Play Again?

Give that man a hand. The melodramatic cliché about the concert pianist or violinist who injures a hand doesn't seem so funny to **Tom Petty**. The singer/guitarist won't know until early this year whether he'll be able to play professionally again.

Petty rammed his left hand into a studio wall October 3, upon listening to a playback from his and the Heartbreakers' forthcoming album. Whatever the motive, the result was several broken bones. Petty underwent four hours of surgery, receiving two pins in his hand.

Petty and the Heartbreakers had completed recording for the new album, *Southern Accents*, prior to the incident. Originally scheduled to be rush-released for the holiday season, the record—Petty's first in over two years—won't be out now until January. One admittedly biased observer described the LP (with three cuts co-written and co-produced by the Eurythmics' Dave Stewart) as Petty's best yet.



EBET ROBERTS

LAURA LEVINE

COMATEENS

A Radio Catch-22

The subject is hit records, and how to get them. Let's ask the **Comateens**, who with three albums under their collective belt, should know what it's all about. How would you describe the hitmaking process, gang?

Lyn Byrd, synthesizer/vocals: "It's kinda frustrating."

Nic North, bass/vocals: "Intensely frustrating."

Hmmm. Maybe we chose the wrong group? Not from the sound of things. *Deal With It*, the New York-based trio's current album, is awash with perky melodies, snappy arrangements and colorful textures. For extra push there's even a guest drummer, replacing "Rolly," the band's longtime Roland drum machine. What there isn't—so far, at least—is radio airplay.

"Music is not the yardstick" for getting on the air, North says; "Arbitron is—a computerized system which shows what people have liked before, but can't possibly show what people will like in the future."

Since Byrd (Billman), North (Dembling) and guitarist brother Oliver got together in 1978, the closest the Comateens have come to U.S. success is "Get Off My Case," a dance top thirty track whose popularity took even the group by surprise. Pete Solley, of Romantics fame, produced *Deal With It*; the Comateens concocted the poppy "Resist Her" as a potential single. And radio turned a deaf ear.

"Radio doesn't listen to records," states Jerry Jaffe, senior vice president, rock division of PolyGram Records. Jaffe signed the Comateens to PolyGram, and he's especially disturbed about the lack of response to "Resist Her." Instead, college radio and stations like WLIR-FM in Hempstead, New York are favoring the funkier "Don't Come Back." (WLIR music director Rosie Pisani says that "'Resist Her' is a pretty track, but 'Don't Come Back' is more in keeping with the way the band sounded, and what we're doing.")

Radio is an important element in the hit equation, but not the only one. It might mean something that while the Comateens have toured France three times (going on a fourth), they have yet to play west of Madison, Wisconsin or south of Washington, D.C. Their name, too, can be offputting to the solid middle Americans who determine solid hits.

So the Comateens are caught in a vicious cycle: Lack of "progressive" radio interest in an album cut precludes a 45 release to bait the top-forty stations. Jaffe laments that key stations like WLIR, KROQ in Los Angeles and San Francisco's KQAK "weren't into" "Resist Her." "I was really looking for a major break-out. We didn't get it. What can I tell ya?"

The Comateens, meanwhile, will have to broadcast their pop-funk music without benefit of radio exposure. Do they find the pop life glamorous?

"Are you kidding?" Byrd laughs. – **Scott Isler**

News Stories by Scott Isler

No Dancing In The Aisles

The music-movie clip wars are heating up. Besides Concert Cinema (*Music Industry News*, October 1984), which provides theaters with concert clips transferred from video, a company called Music Motions is traveling a similar route.

There are differences. Music Motions will have none of video technology, distributing only clips originally shot on 35mm film. The company even produced its first offering, Carly Simon's "It Happens Everyday"—"a costly venture for a launch," notes president Tom Hayes.

The Simon clip ran in only sixty theaters. Hayes expects much bigger numbers with Music Motions' second film, "Dynamite" by Jermaine Jackson. Following will be Ian Siam, Julian Lennon and a particularly striking "Madam Butterfly" from Malcolm McLaren. Unlike the sponsored Concert Cinema video transfers, Music Motions films are commercial-free—for now, anyway. Hayes is investigating "sponsorship" tie-ins that would enable the company to supply theaters gratis, rather than charge for rental. Hayes mentions that twenty-five percent of U.S. movie palaces are showing advertising spots anyway.

Art, "product," what's the difference.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

GLENN BRANCA

A Fifth Symphony From Another B

"I'm interested in finding the gray zones between the cluster and the triad," **Glenn Branca** says. His method in this search is a kind of musical sandblasting; Branca uses an electric guitar army to induce amplitude and harmonic discord of biblical proportions. The result is a wall of sound undreamt of in Phil Spector's philosophy.

He furthered his case eloquently with "Symphony No. 5," which had its U.S. premiere October 13 as an apt kickoff to UCLA's "The Art of Spectacle" performance festival. Despite some nods toward symphonic form—seven movements of varied intensities, Branca acting as manic conductor—this piece (subtitled "Describing Planes of an Expanding Hypersphere") is nonetheless rooted in a nonclassical element: distilled rage.

Rumors had Branca moving away from electric guitar. Not entirely true, but he has adjusted his attitude. The ten-piece ensemble featured several guitars, some fretless, some played with E-bows. A "harmonics guitar" was essentially a long neck played with a steel; a "mallet guitar" mated hammer dulcimer with the Stick. There were also self-constructed "harpsichords," organ and fretted violin. Branca's attentive, anxious-looking musicians kept their eyes on the composer, in rose-colored glasses, as he conducted in rabbit-punch fashion.

Drummer Stephan Wischerth got the freest reign. His punk-hued rhythmic flow became the clearest link to civilization, a pulse under ominous chord bombasts and elongated sonic epiphanies. Much of "Symphony No. 5" seems like an exercise in tension and metric subdivision. Branca, though, balances artfully between chaos and order. The final movement begins with simple tonic notes, gradually working its way out to a mesmerizing point of near-white noise.

Branca is clearly a harmonic homewrecker. But his guerrilla art music, for all its deliberate, mammoth angst, is some of the most strikingly dark around. "I want to hear new sounds, that's all," he explained disarmingly after the show. "It requires compositional technique; it's as simple as that." He smirks a little. "It's not magic."

Some would beg to differ. – **Josef Woodard**

STAPLE SINGERS

Slippin' Back Via Talking Heads

"You don't wanna sing nothin' you don't know," Mavis Staples says. So she was tempted to let "Slippery People" slide when Talking Head David Byrne offered the gospel-rooted **Staple Singers** the tune for *The Turning Point*, their first LP in four years. "Normally you can look at a song and see right in your head what it's about. But *this* guy—he put down some lyrics there...I say wait a minute!"

Mavis knew about the Heads, but she wanted to be sure the song's weird words expressed values her family could endorse. "You look at 'a wheel inside a wheel' and '7x5, they were livin' creatures'—well, my, I went straight to the Bible."

While theological research helped, a call to producer Mike Piccirillo won the day. "He told me that David Byrne had been to a holiness church," Staples recalls with pleasure and admiration, "and he saw these people shoutin' and speakin' in tongues. I said, '*Oh*, all right!'"

Now the Staples hope their "Slippery People"—a hit on black and dance charts—will cross over to a broader audience in the manner of "Respect Yourself," "I'll Take You There" and "Let's Do It Again." According to Mavis, the 80s require the soulful grooves and inspirational lyrics the Staples have purveyed for over thirty years.

"We're livin' in a world of turmoil. The music is a way to help us survive times like these. One of those songs off our album like 'Bridges Instead Of Walls' or 'That's What Friends Are For' might lift a person and make them say, 'I'm gonna try another day.'" – **Anthony DeCurtis**

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Freddie Goes to Bophuthatswana

You can add **Queen** to the list of artists who put their money where their social conscience should be. The British band spent most of October in South Africa, playing eleven shows over three weeks at the Sun City Super Bowl in Bophuthatswana. Sun City is nominally multi-racial, which means that any black (or non-African "colored") with $10 to $25 to spare could see Queen in their longest one-location concert stint to date. Hugh Masekela was not the opening act.

In violating a Musicians' Union boycott of South Africa, Queen enters a hall of shame already peopled with Linda Ronstadt, Chicago, Andy Gibb and the Beach Boys, among others. "Music transcends all else," says Queen business manager Jim Beach. He did say "music," didn't he?

STUDIO QUALITY BUILT IN

Pictured below is the Ibanez MSP1000, GE1502, and the GE3101

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Go-Go Gone, Cats Stray

Platinum is not forever, as two groups who sell in the millions proved recently. The **Go-Go's** will be waking up without guitarist Jane Wiedlin, who announced in October that she was leaving the group for a solo career. The move probably didn't surprise *Musician* readers; our August profile of the band found Wiedlin downbeat about not being allowed to sing. Kathy Valentine will be switching back from bass to her first love, guitar, and the band will look for a new bassist (presumably female). They are said to be unconcerned with Wiedlin's departure.

GLOBUS/SIPA PRESS

The **Stray Cats** "have decided to separate," according to an October press statement, "in order to allow each member to pursue his own interests." The announcement came after the fact for guitarist/singer Brian Setzer. He's already played local (Long Island) gigs with other musicians, and demoed tunes in Los Angeles with producer Jimmy Iovine for a possible solo album. Last month he went very public with his independence by appearing with Robert Plant on *Saturday Night Live*.

HOWARD ROSENBERG

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

Yogurt, Cottage Cheese, Wool Socks

Post-punk white funk is a familiar style these days, but Los Angeles' **Red Hot Chili Peppers** work the form over with a lunatic vengeance. The Punch-and-Judy humor with which the Red Hots assault their lubricated rhythms has made the quartet a popular and wildly unpredictable live attraction for two years. Now they are taking their badass madness to a wider audience with an EMI/Enigma album.

The group is the brainchild of two high school pals: bassist Flea (Michael Balzary), late of the L.A. punk bands Fear and What Is This, and vocalist Anthony "Swan" Kiedis. With guitarist Hillel Slovak and drummer Jack Irons—since replaced by Jack Sherman and Cliff Martinez, respectively—the Chili Peppers approximated the whipcrack sound of nouveau-funk units like Defunkt, and laced it with intoxicating zaniness. Onstage, impromptu wrestling matches are a matter of course. Band members have been known to relieve and expose themselves in mid-show; one performance found the group playing nude except for wool socks covering their genitalia.

Naturally, these antics attracted the attention of A&R scouts, and eventually a deal with EMI/Enigma. The Chili Peppers' self-titled debut, produced by Andy Gill of Gang of Four fame, clearly lacks the anything-goes humor. "Andy said he didn't think you could take the live show and put it on vinyl," Sherman says.

Live, however, it's still business as usual. A yogurt and cottage cheese fight onstage at one recent gig destroyed one of Sherman's guitars; at one industry showcase, Flea pulled down the hapless guitarist's pants in front of a sold-out crowd of a thousand industry mavens.

For all the tomfoolery, the Red Hot Chili Peppers don't joke about their music. "I'm very serious about being a lovable fun clown," Flea says. "But nothing is more important to me than playing good music." – **Chris Morris**

Boston: They Shall Be Released?

Once upon a time a band called **Boston** put out an album, sold eight million copies, and made everybody (especially CBS, their record company) very happy. Then they put out an album that sold only three and a half million copies. Then they didn't put out.

The group apparently suffered a musical writer's block as huge as their sales clout. Boston's inactivity since *Don't Look Back* in 1978 prompted CBS Records to file a $20 million lawsuit against them for breach of contract in 1983.

The startling—or maybe not so startling—news now is that Boston has signed to MCA Records. A CBS lawyer notes the number of lawsuits has now doubled. Nevertheless, Boston manager Jeff Dorenfeld affirms the connection, adding, "MCA is the most artist-oriented label in the country right now."

Boston has boiled down to a core of guitarist Tom Scholz and singer Brad Delp. It might not be a good idea to hold your breath until the third Boston album, over three years in the making, comes out. There's no release date yet, though Dorenfeld says "most" of the record "is definitely finished."

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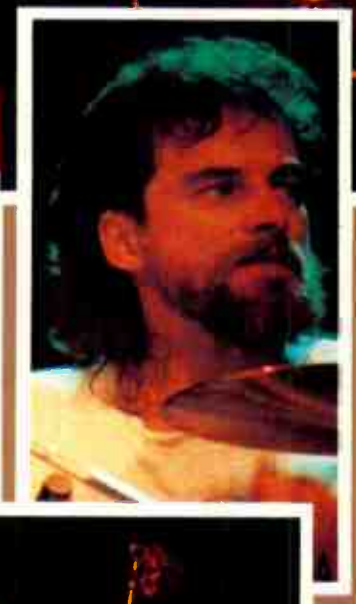

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THE J. GEILS BAND

J. Geils, Seth Justman, Stephen Jo Bladd, Danny Klein and Magic Dick got odd.

GREG GORMAN

DAVID FRICKE

A WORLD-CHAMPION ROCK 'EM-SOCK 'EM BAND EXPANDS AS IT CONTRACTS

Man, if these walls could talk..." Stephen Jo Bladd idly rubs a hand over his dense five o'clock shadow and gazes up in awe. The walls of the J. Geils Band's rehearsal studio in Boston are soundproofed with mangy red and turquoise carpeting. Over that, posters, vintage stage backdrops and magazine cartoons already say plenty about the good life and hard times of the Geils band. For seventeen years they've carried the R&B torch and maniac party spirit into bars and stadiums in spite of financial disaster, niggardly record company promotion and top forty indifference.

Hidden behind the door is a white silk banner declaring "J. Geils Band, 1982—World Champions." In a room full of memorabilia, it best sums up the jubilation and self-congratulation attendant upon *Freeze-Frame* and "Centerfold" both going Number One—a just reward. The banner is also a poignant reminder of Geils' sudden dive back to ground zero when singer Peter Wolf left the band.

Indeed, if these walls could talk, they would probably tell us more about that split than Bladd, keyboard player/producer Seth Justman and harmonica man Magic Dick are willing to let on this afternoon. The trio struck an agreement with Wolf, blacking out media coverage aside from a stiff, enigmatic announcement in the fall of 1983. In his *Musician* spread recently, Wolf would not say under what circumstances he left the Geils band, he mentioned only that making his solo debut *Lights Out* was the best way to beat the pain. His former bandmates would prefer to concentrate on the healing powers of their new Wolfless LP, *You're Gettin' Even While I'm Gettin' Odd*. But there are times when they can't conceal a still open wound.

"People are interested in what happened, and to a degree it's their business," the soft-spoken Justman admits reluctantly. "But to the degree that it might hurt people—Peter, ourselves—it isn't their business." And that's where it stops. Almost.

Because *You're Gettin' Even* is as influenced by the tensions and politics preceding Wolf's departure as by the confusion and freedom that followed. Justman says the band was seven tracks deep into the album when the divorce became final; Wolf had already quit twice. The dismal chart performance of a mediocre '82 live album (*Showtime*), a pet Wolf project, had cancelled out much of the *Freeze-Frame* euphoria. Wolf's extra-curricular work with Boston funk wiz Michael Jonzun also posed problems for the band.

"While we were in the studio cutting basic tracks," Bladd explains, "he was in another studio with another group of people writing his own material." By the time Wolf began to lobby aggressively for his new material to be on the Geils album (recut, of course, by the band), relations had deteriorated to a point of no return. "No one was fired or kicked out," Bladd insists. "When the split finally happened, it was certainly not a shock to anyone in the band." Friends and press, though, interpreted the group's dutiful silence as a sign of guilt. "People thought we were the bad guys," Justman says ruefully. "There were no bad guys in this situation."

So far, there haven't been any bad records either. Wolf's *Lights Out* stands up to *Purple Rain*, Hall & Oates' *Big Bam Boom* and Arthur Baker's Cyndi Lauper remixes as one of '84's best incorporations of rock flash and hip-hop sass into new funk technology. *You're Gettin' Even While I'm Gettin' Odd*, with its perverse clutter and frantic momentum, takes off with a vengeance from *Freeze-Frame*'s rococo techno-metal sound. The new album veers from boozy stompers dressed up in sheet-metal harmonies and studio effects to the sad limp of "Tell 'Em, Jonesy," a song of pain and motherly loss roughed up by harsh industrial electronics. In its own weird way, "Jonesy" is typical of the extremes to which the J. Geils Band under Justman's subversive direction are prepared to go.

"Before this, we had a *routine* on how to be creative," says Justman, at thirty-three the youngest Geils member by five years. "It involved the basic as-

sumption that Peter was going to sing the song, Stephen and I would sing the background and Peter and I would write the songs. There was freedom to expand and have input, but without Peter there, it forced us to totally change how we worked. We had a chance to do something, anything, special. It was invigorating, exciting and"— he pauses thoughtfully—"scary."

At first it was just annoying. One of the seven tracks under construction when Wolf left was scrapped entirely. The others—including "Heavy Petting" and the title song (which squashes any nasty hints that it's a snipe at Wolf)—were either re-scored or re-recorded to accommodate Bladd and Justman's higher vocal ranges. There was some discussion early on of hiring a new singer, possibly female, but the band never got around to auditions. On previous tours Bladd had subbed for Wolf on some Sam & Dave and Eddie Floyd tunes. Way back when the J. Geils Band was just an acoustic trio with bassist Danny Klein, Magic Dick had done the honors. "After intellectually considering all the possibilities," Justman explains, "the idea that got us off the most was, 'Hey, we all have voices here. Let's see what we can do.'"

What they did was, in Justman's word, "maximize." On "Californicatin'," his and Bladd's multi-layered vocals careen in cartoon doo-wop harmonies. Justman frequently fortified Bladd's acoustic pounding by surrounding it with tracks of room echo. On the album's title cut, the drum kit, a Linn-Drum and Simmons electronic drum set periodically collide in a volcanic clatter. "We don't want to be a museum blues band," Justman says with admirable restraint.

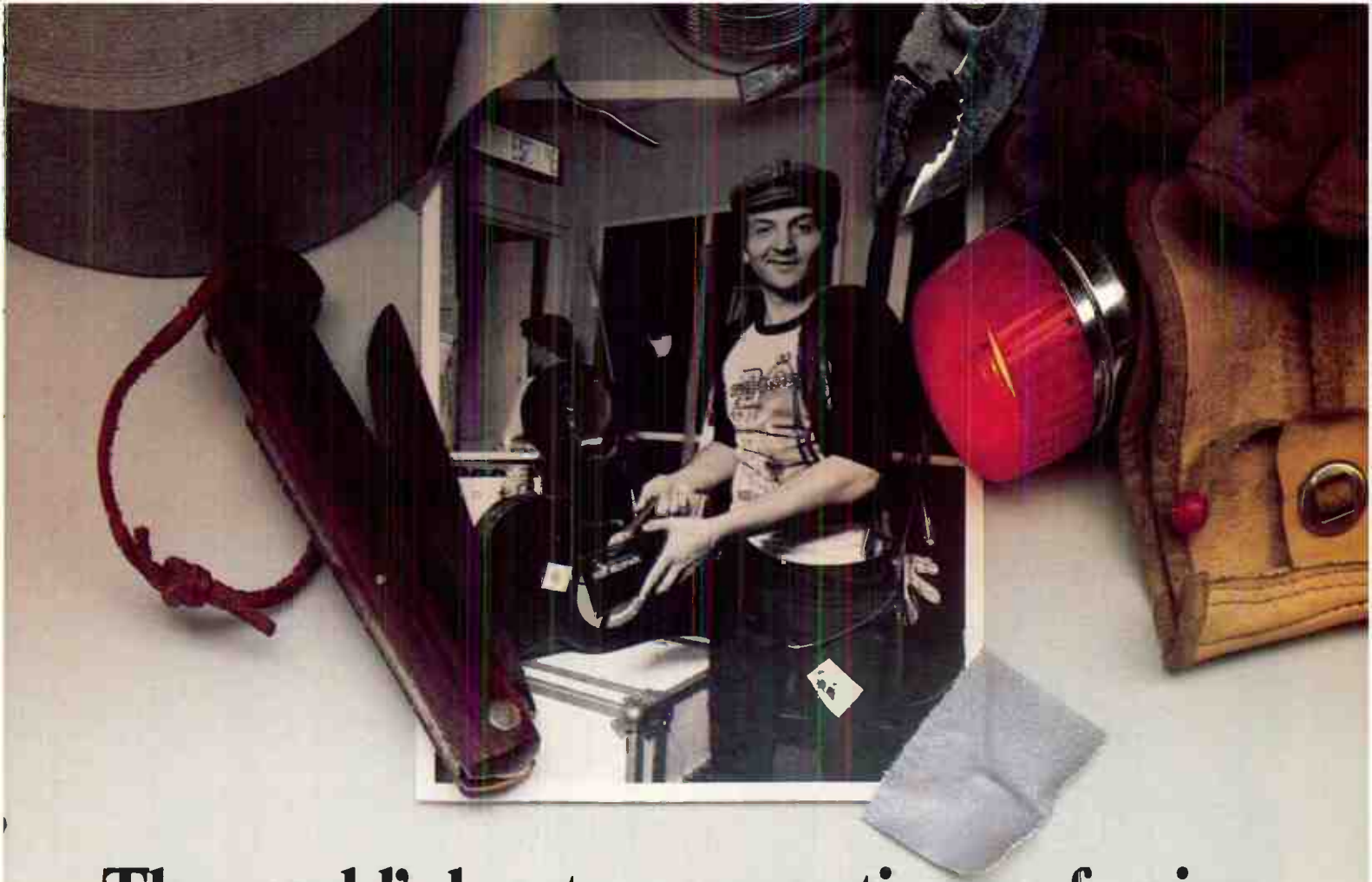
The J. Geils Band was never that stuffy in the first place. Wolf set the tone with daffy leapfrog dancing and hipster tongue tripping the jive fandango. On record, they always respected the blues forms from which they drew inspiration. But from 1972's *Bloodshot* on, they never recognized its accepted parameters. "Give It To Me" was a saucy romp through Jamaican reggae; "Monkey Island," a noble nine-minute failure, toyed with epic pop flourishes; "Love Stinks" tested the heavy-metal properties of "done-somebody-wrong" soul. So the hidden influences on "The Bite From Inside," on the new album, should come as no surprise.

"In a weird way, the basic pattern for that song could be Muddy Waters," Justman suggests, humming "Bite"'s opening bass vocal riff. "But the song is influenced a great deal by Charles Mingus. A lot of that blues-and-holler stuff he was doing in things like 'Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting,' that chanting and moaning thing—you can hear that especially in the middle section just before and after the harp solo. And there's a lot of blues in that song, in the way that Mingus could make blues that was so real and yet so modern.

"What we're doing is drawing on what gets us off. It's a modern way of expressing a lot of the same emotions that blues guys and jazz people, any of the real emotional people, have."

Dangerously idealistic talk for a pop album, even an ambitious one. But Magic Dick, who traces his harmonica influences back through Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Roy Eldridge, backs Justman a hundred and one percent. "Before the word 'bebop' existed," Dick jumps in, his extraordinary mushroom halo of black curls bobbing as he talks, "people had difficulty discussing it, even knowing that they were all talking about the same thing. To me, one of the greatest challenges of making this record was coming up with music that you *didn't* know what to call."

People might have a few off-color words for the prepared piano Justman uses to preface the title tracks. As an occasional fan of John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Clare Fischer, he stuck old rags, torn-up T-shirts and bath towels between the strings and then attacked them with hammers, mallets and a pair of brushes from Bladd's drum kit. The resulting sixty-seven-second intro is hard going but well worth the moment



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when that clucking piano explodes into the entire band. It makes you wonder what the sixteen-minute version of prepared piano Justman has stashed in his closet sounds like. [*I'll pass. – Ed.*]

There probably are no words yet to describe what Magic Dick does with his harp on *You're Gettin' Even*. The album's dense arrangements called for extreme measures. Dick has been working with a friend, Pierre Beauregard, on a new chromatic harmonica: basically a standard ten-hole Marine Band harp with altered and detuned reeds for a jazzier, more melodic freedom. His unusually lyrical solo on "The Bite From Inside" is played on one of these inventions.

You're Gettin' Even also displays the harpist's interest in space-age studio outboard gear and electronic synthesis. For his break on "Concealed Weapons," Dick played through a Prophet synthesizer and recorded *that* sound in a studio hallway. Add to that his soaring brass-and-harp conspiracies with the Uptown Horns.

"In the past, way back to records like *Ladies Invited*, we used the harp as a horn section just through massive overdubs," Dick explains, "fifteen, sometimes twenty harps at a time. But it became too easy for me and ultimately it wasn't interesting enough. If you hear a harp section molded like a horn section, your ear will fool you and say, 'Yeah, that's a horn section recorded a certain way.' But horns and harp together have a similarity and dissimilarity."

Too bad he can't always tell you about his studio tricks. "I don't like to keep records of how I got a sound. It would be too easy to look it up and just go, 'Okay, how about a Number Three here?'"

If only it were that easy for the revitalized J. Geils Band to envision life in the big rock arenas without Wolf leading the attack. *Freeze-Frame* also hangs over the band like a platinum specter—a tough act to follow under the best of circumstances. But Justman and his blues brothers demonstrate unshakable faith in each other this afternoon—nothing different from what these rehearsal studio walls have seen for the past seventeen years.

"This album is a success as far as we're concerned," Justman states proudly. "When we had done all the overdubs and were just about to start mixing, we said, 'No matter what it does, if it sells ten copies, it's a hit to us.'"

You know why? Magic Dick does. "Music is art and art should disturb. And this record disturbs the shit out of me."

Geils' Pile

"This is a hand-made album," engineer Steve Marcantonio claims proudly about *You're Gettin' Even While I'm Gettin' Odd*; there were no computer mixes. But the J. Geils Band employed just about everything else in the studio. Outboard gear included an Ursa Major space station, Publison digital delay, Quad 8 noise gates, dbx 160 limiters, AMS digital reverb and nearly the entire Eventide catalog: digital delay, flanger, phaser, harmonizer, and reverb.

For guitars, **J. Geils** alternated between a Gibson GS80, a pre-CBS Fender Strat and a Gibson Les Paul of unknown vintage. He usually ran them through an old Fender Champ amp, playing through the amp head in the studio with a monitor speaker in one of the Longview Studio barns. **Danny Klein** played his Steinberger bass direct to board, sometimes with the Ursa Major or one of the digital delays in between. **Seth Justman**'s main keyboards included a Yamaha DX7 and CP80, an ancient Moog synthesizer, a Yamaha electric grand piano, a monster Hammond B-3 organ and a Roland Jupiter synth. He often used an Emulator with them.

Magic Dick's Wang or altered Hohner Marine Band harps went into an Astatic BLJ30 "truck dispatcher's mike." He also used a Fender Champ, often miked in the barn and put through a variety of digital delays. **Stephen Jo Bladd**'s drums were Sonors, with Zildjian cymbals, mixed with electronic Simmons and a LinnDrum. For a big acoustic boom Bladd used several Sennheiser mikes: 421s on the toms, a DR on bass drum, and 87s overhead. A Shure SM57 went with the snare, a KM84 with the high-hat. Room mikes were Sennheiser 47 and 87s, PZMs and a dusty old RCA 770X, in different combinations.

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MARK ROWLAND

HAS THE ADULT CONTEMPORARY SONGWRITER ECLIPSED THE JAZZ SINGER?

Al Jarreau confessing to High Crimes and assorted mellow misdemeanors.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Four Jarreau brothers grew up in Milwaukee. They all sang. Three still live there. "My older brother had a fine tenor voice," Al recalls. "The next one was more the jazzer. I'd sit around and watch them rehearse, and I learned a lot. They did sort of Four Freshmen harmonies—maybe not as sophisticated as the Hi Los, but very good. That's where I learned a lot of it—one brother would sing a line, and we'd sing it back. Or he'd make a funny sound with his mouth, and we'd repeat it. Walking to the store, or to church...my father was a preacher, and until I was about ten, that's what I wanted to be too." Jarreau smiles, and reflects for a moment.

"Daddy-O Daily. That was a radio show from Chicago. I'd listen to that with my oatmeal every morning before school. I heard Diz, big bands, Illinois Jacquet, Nat King Cole. I would hear *Screamin'* Jay Hawkins, too," Jarreau says, drawling out the name with sly amusement. "Quite a trip. I loved Cole, and Ella, Johnny Mathis, and of course Jon Hendricks too. So I was in the mold of all these people, at least at first; I was just a standup jazz singer."

Eventually Al Jarreau turned out to be much more. Over the course of the last decade he first expanded, and later popularized, the rhythmic and sonic vocabulary of the voice—a wildly inventive scat singer who laid claim to the tradition of Hendricks and Ella Fitzgerald, and a precursor to even more daring contemporary stylists like Bobby McFerrin. For a while Jarreau even managed to walk that tightrope between jazz sensibility and popular acclaim. But with each subsequent gold record, each succeeding collaboration with L.A. studiomeisters like Jay Graydon, Greg Phillinganes and David Foster, Jarreau has drifted further afield from the experimental/soulful jazz of early records like *We Got By,* and more toward suave nightclub pop. Among jazz purists, Jarreau is thus guilty of a transgression which ranks somewhere between throwing the World Series and kidnapping the Lindbergh baby.

Personally, I was a lot more offended when Neil Diamond starred in a movie called *The Jazz Singer,* but let's not digress: If Jarreau's recent music isn't real jazz, whatever *that* is, his subtle refinements of dynamics, timbre and phrasing are still considerably more knowing and graceful than most pop peers. And in truth, Jarreau's increasingly understated style is less obtrusive than many of his earlier, more gymnastic efforts. "I think the vocals tended to carry the older songs before," Jarreau declares. "Now I'm more involved in the writing of really complete songs that have their own structure and character. It's more sophisticated. They lend themselves to some vocal treatment, but a lot of the attractiveness lies with the song itself."

In other words, Al Jarreau the singer has become stepservant to Al Jarreau the songwriter; which is, I think, too bad. Though models of pop craft, the songs on his most recent album, *High Crime,* leave little room for personal interpretation. Or maybe it's just that so many of these new tunes and arrangements fit themselves so snugly within that all too familiar "adult contemporary" groove. Songs like "Let's Pretend" and "After All"—which sounds suspiciously like a theme song from one of those achingly cute Dudley Moore movies (Jarreau did in fact sing it on *Days of Our Lives*) could as easily be covered by Dionne Warwick or Julio Iglesias, and probably

Van Morrison emerges from the shadows

by Bill Flanagan

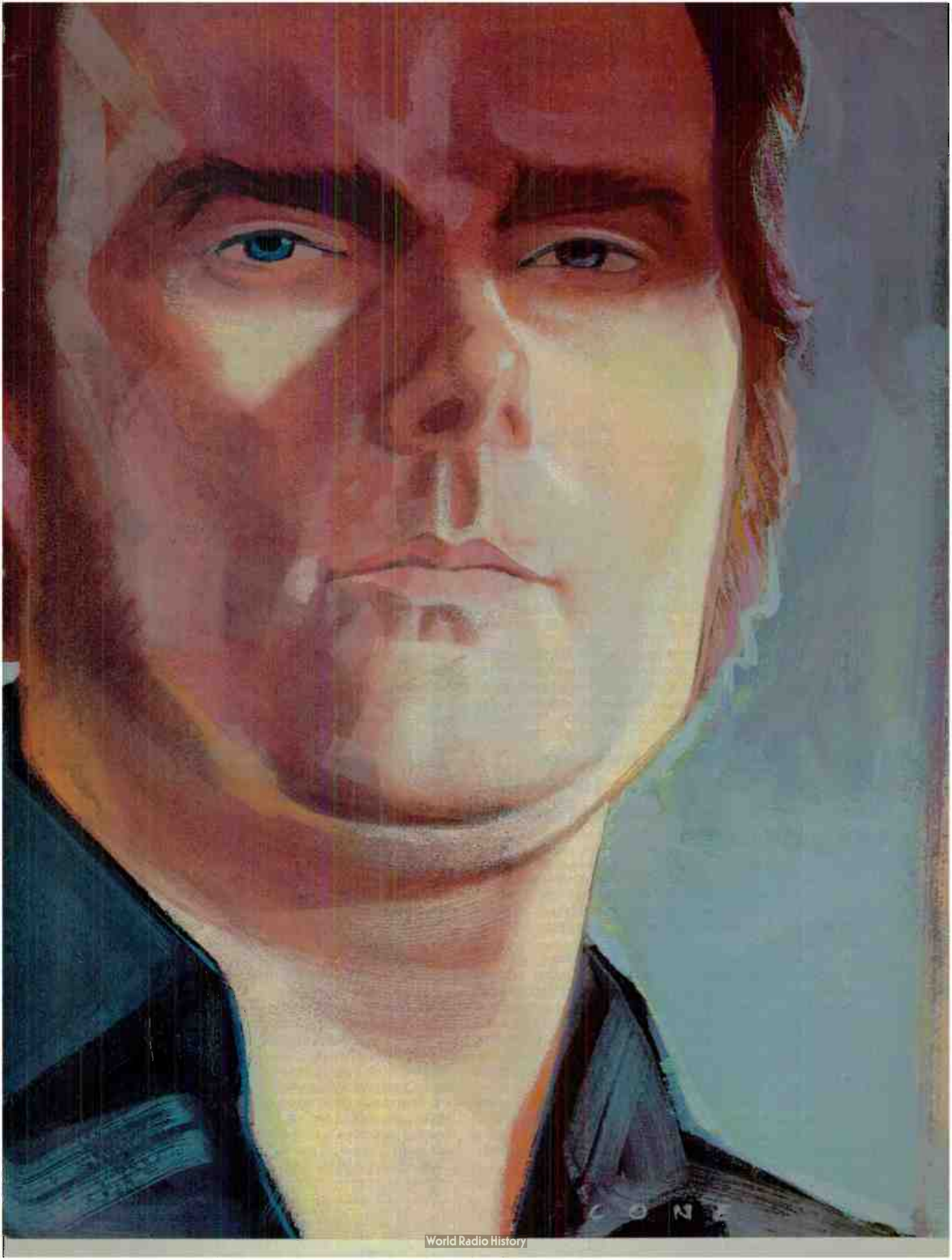
When I arrived at the London airport in late September the middle-aged customs agent asked the purpose of my visit. I said I was in Britain to interview Van Morrison, "a singer." The agent looked at me as if I'd explained Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister. "Mister Flanagan," he nodded, "I *know* who Van Morrison is."

People tell me Van Morrison isn't as famous as he used to be – that teenagers and folks who don't follow music might not even know who he is. I could accept that, but I find no proof of it. I'm constantly amazed to find how many people still follow Van Morrison. Musicians still moon over *Astral Weeks* and *Veedon Fleece*; rock stars still launch into Van talk during their own interviews; and people of the Woodstock generation whom I thought hadn't kept in touch surprise me by knowing the words to late Morrison songs like "The Healing Has Begun" or "She Gives Me Religion."

Van Morrison was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1945 and raised as a Jehovah's Witness. He achieved notoriety in the mid-60s as songwriter, lead singer and only permanent member of an Irish R&B band called Them, best remembered for "Here Comes The Night" and Morrison's classic "Gloria." In 1967 he came to America and had his first solo hit with "Brown Eyed Girl."

The next year Morrison signed to Warner Bros. and released *Astral Weeks,* an impressionistic song cycle that stands today as one of the most-loved albums of the 60s

Illustration by William Cone



MUSICIAN: *What musical influences have remained strong?*
MORRISON: Ray Charles and James Brown still get me off. But they're not influences now. Ray Charles got me motivated. He was an early influence. But I don't really *have* any influences since I've done my own thing. But there's still some people I admire and listen to who can't be ignored. You were talking about poetry—Dylan is the greatest living poet.
MUSICIAN: *Dylan seems to feel a special kinship for you. You're the only musical figure I see him quote in interviews. I've always connected you two. Even at your most popular you both seemed committed to your art, to personal visions, to creating something that would outlive you.*
MORRISON: Yeah, I think that's true. Dylan's not pop. No way. We're definitely connected on various levels. I saw him quite recently and I thought, "Well, here's somebody who's still doing it and he's *good*." It sort of gave me a kick in the ass.

"Ray Charles and James Brown still get me off. But I don't really have any influences since doing my own thing."

MUSICIAN: *People in Boston claim you wrote* Astral Weeks *when you were living up there, but everything about the album feels like Ireland.*
MORRISON: No, I didn't write it in Boston. I wrote most of that in Belfast. I was carrying around those songs for a couple of years before I recorded them. One of them was written in '66, some of them in '67. But they were mostly written in Belfast. I think I wrote one of them in New York.
MUSICIAN: *Is there a long unreleased track from the* Astral Weeks *sessions? I read years ago that you didn't include it because it would have made* Astral Weeks *a double album.*
MORRISON: Yeah, but it was just recorded on a two-track tape. I never did it in a studio because I realized I couldn't do it again. It's probably thrown out by now.
MUSICIAN: *Did the real Madame George recognize herself in your song?*
MORRISON: Well, no. Because Madame George was about six or seven different people (laughs) who probably couldn't find themselves in there if they tried.
MUSICIAN: *In your 1970* Rolling Stone *interview you told Happy Traum that* Astral Weeks *was a rock opera. Did you really mean that?*
MORRISON: No. "Rock opera" was wrong. When I did that interview I'd had a few drinks. This is the problem with doing interviews. You see it later and you realize that you said things which were nonsense. That was one of them. I meant that the approach was operatic.
MUSICIAN: *If ever a record came from somewhere* outside, Astral Weeks *is it. A lot of your stuff feels like it's part of something bigger than our usual experience. Dylan said once that songs come through the writer, and he cited "Tupelo Honey," saying that that song always existed, and you were the vehicle it came through.*
MORRISON: That's the only way I write. That's the only way I *can* write. See, the unfortunate thing is getting caught up in the *business* of music. It tends to throw a shape on my creativity. When I was doing those albums, for instance, I really just wanted to write and record. Then there's the whole thing of, "Well, you have to go out and promote these albums," et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So then it becomes a business. And the more involved in business I get, the less I write. For me writing means getting the right kind of *space* to write. And that's less and less frequent because I'm not in the space to write, for this to come through. It's not just a matter of sittin' down at the typewriter and bangin' away. Which sometimes I have to resort to.
MUSICIAN: *The* Wavelength *album and tour seemed to be an attempt by you to satisfy the marketplace.*
MORRISON: But actually it wasn't. The *Wavelength* album was sort of a diversion. It was just to have a bit of fun and go back to how it felt to play rock 'n' roll. That's all it was. I think the fact that it was commercially successful really didn't have anything to do with anything. It's just the way it went down. It was intended to be a bit less serious than my other projects.
MUSICIAN: *The* Wavelength *tour was the only one where you pretty much came out and played all the hits. I saw a show in Boston and it was "Caravan," "Wild Night," "Domino" and so on. Then I saw you at the Paladium in New York the next week when you stopped the show and walked off. Was one the result of the other?*
MORRISON: No. That was a result of playing with a rock band. And traveling with a bunch of people who did things like stay up playing piano all night long—stupid things that you do when you're a teenager. With the result that I didn't get as much rest as I should have and I was completely exhausted. I just didn't have whatever it takes to perform. I was just, in short, fed up. I felt about as much like performing as I did like going to the moon.

And the tour was too long. When the tour was originally being booked I told the Bill Graham organization (Morrison's then-management) and everyone involved, "This is what I do." I mean, I've been in it long enough to know what I do. I said, "I'll do a certain amount of weeks and I'll do a certain amount of time." And they proceeded to convince me that I should do more than that. I compromised when I shouldn't have. A terrible thing to do as an artist is to compromise when you know better. So I said, "Okay." And consequently more dates were booked than I was physically capable of doing. By the time I got to New York I'd already *done* it and I was completely exhausted. I had so many nights in New York to do which I wasn't capable of doing from physical exhaustion.
MUSICIAN: *How strict a bandleader are you? When you bring a song in to record do you tell people what to play or do you let musicians work out their own parts?*
MORRISON: As far as that goes, it's got nothing to do with music. For me it's a magical event. When I go into the studio, I'm a magician. I make things happen. That's the way it is. Whatever is working in that particular space at that particular time, I use, I take advantage of. It's got nothing to do with *parts,* with who plays what. Either you come in that day and make something happen or you don't. There's no thought involved in it. It's a different process.
MUSICIAN: *You released no album between* Veedon Fleece *(1974) and* A Period Of Transition *(1977). During those years there were rumors and stories in the press of you recording albums and refusing to release them.*
MORRISON: No. People don't want you to have fun. That's what it comes down to. I'd taken some time off and I was enjoying myself. Everyone I'd run into would say, "What are you doing? Doing an album?" I was just sort of dabbling in things to do something, because everywhere I went people wanted something. I mean, there wasn't any album in me at the time. People just didn't feel good that I wasn't doing any albums and tours and being insane, that I was actually living life. They couldn't leave it alone. They made up stories that it was this, that and the other thing. I did some sessions that were not an album as such. They didn't rate. Everybody said, "You should put it out." Simply 'cause *they* were putting albums out. That's all it was. It was just that kind of nonsense.
MUSICIAN: Into The Music *seemed like a new beginning, and the material on your new live album only goes that far back. Was that LP a cut-off point for you?*
MORRISON: Yeah, I think that's when I got back into it. That's why I called it *Into The Music.* I think I sort of lost the thing somewhere along the line from being so involved with all

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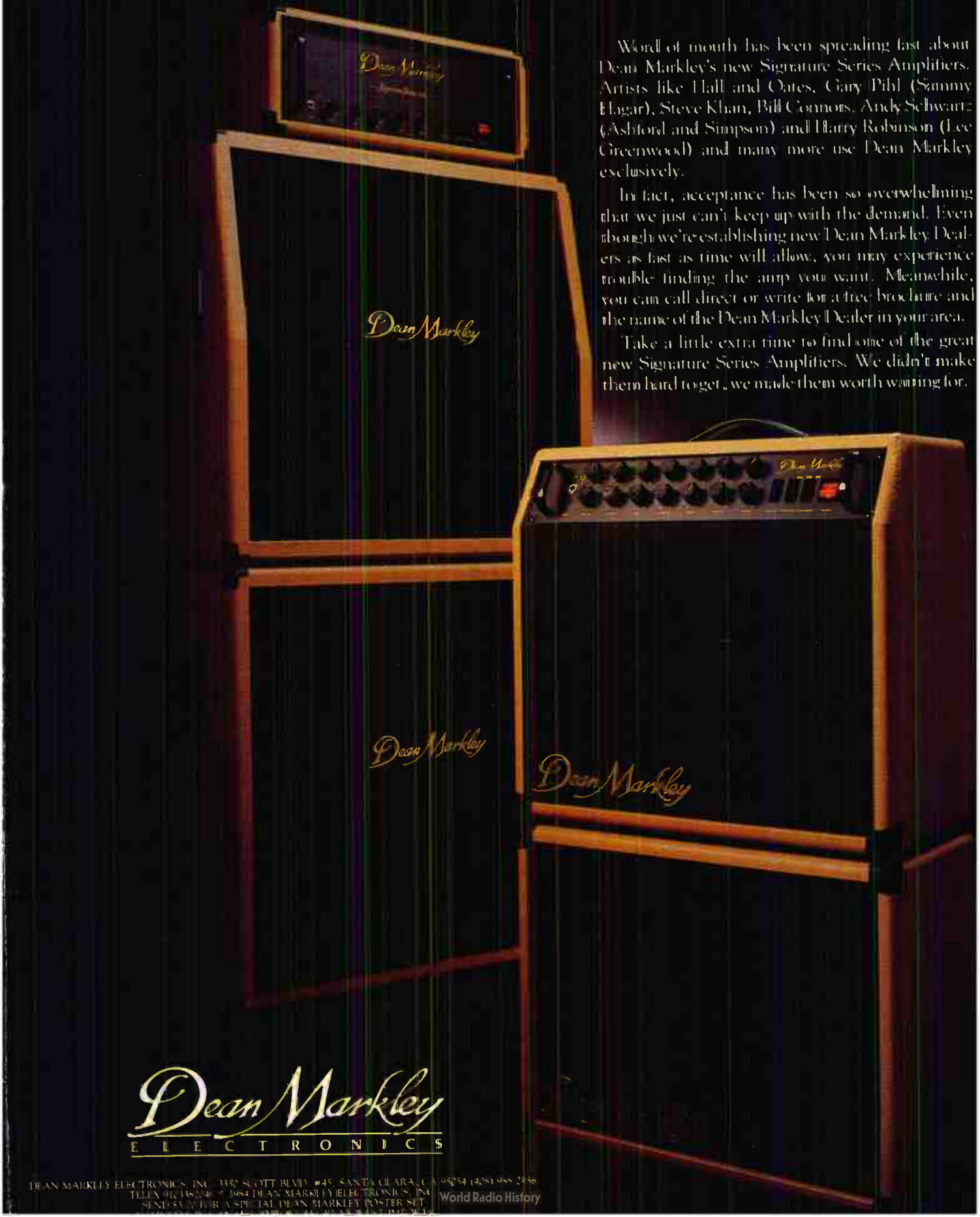

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those *business* people. You forget what you're doing. You're dealing with people telling you that they want to sell albums, and you lose track of why you're doing it. Once in a while you have to backtrack. Otherwise you just end up saying, "Well, there's easier ways of making money if that's what it's about."

MUSICIAN: *"Full Force Gale" from* Into The Music *described a spiritual awakening. There's always been a spiritual content in your work, but it's more pronounced on your recent albums. Did you go through a conversion experience?*

MORRISON: No, no, no. It's something I've always carried. There was no conversion experience. Not at all. I'd say I'm a Christian. I've been a Christian since I was born. But that's it.

MUSICIAN: *Do you go to church?*

MORRISON: Now and again.

MUSICIAN: Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart *has a thanks to L. Ron Hubbard. Are you involved with him?*

MORRISON: Well, I've had scientology auditing, but you should contact your nearest branch to find out about it. I'm not going to explain it.

MUSICIAN: *There is in your music a sense of spiritual ecstasy. There's very little penance or fear of the Lord.*

MORRISON: I don't really put it in words as such. It's very hard to answer this kind of question. I don't box that.

MUSICIAN: *The albums that you, the Band and Dylan made when you were all living in Woodstock projected a feeling very different from the counter-culture associations "Woodstock" evoked in later years.*

MORRISON: I don't know. Because I didn't really *see* anyone up there. I can't remember. There was definitely a vibe to that place but I don't remember. I can't remember last week.

MUSICIAN: *Do you remember writing "Almost Independence Day"?*

MORRISON: Yeah, I remember that. I picked up the phone and the operator said, "You have a phone call from Oregon. It's Mister So-and-so." It was a guy from the group Them. And then there was nobody on the other end. So out of that I starting writing, "I can hear Them calling, 'way from Oregon." That's where that came from.

MUSICIAN: *Your concerts can be riveting. On a good night you seem to go so far into yourself....*

MORRISON: It's exactly the opposite. You go out of yourself. But it *appears* you're going in. I'm extremely shy about performing, which is probably the reason I like to write and record much more than I do to perform. To perform I almost have to assume another identity. I have to almost play a part and get psyched up, to walk onstage. Otherwise I couldn't do it. So I'm playing a role, and doing the music within that context. 'Cause I'm really very shy, you see.

MUSICIAN: *You played a series of concerts in London recently. Are you doing, in your live shows, any songs that predate* Into The Music?

MORRISON: Oh, yeah. I do some of the old stuff. At least one from *Astral Weeks*, a few from *Dominic's, Hard Nose The Highway,* those kind of things.

MUSICIAN: *Do you plan any American shows?*

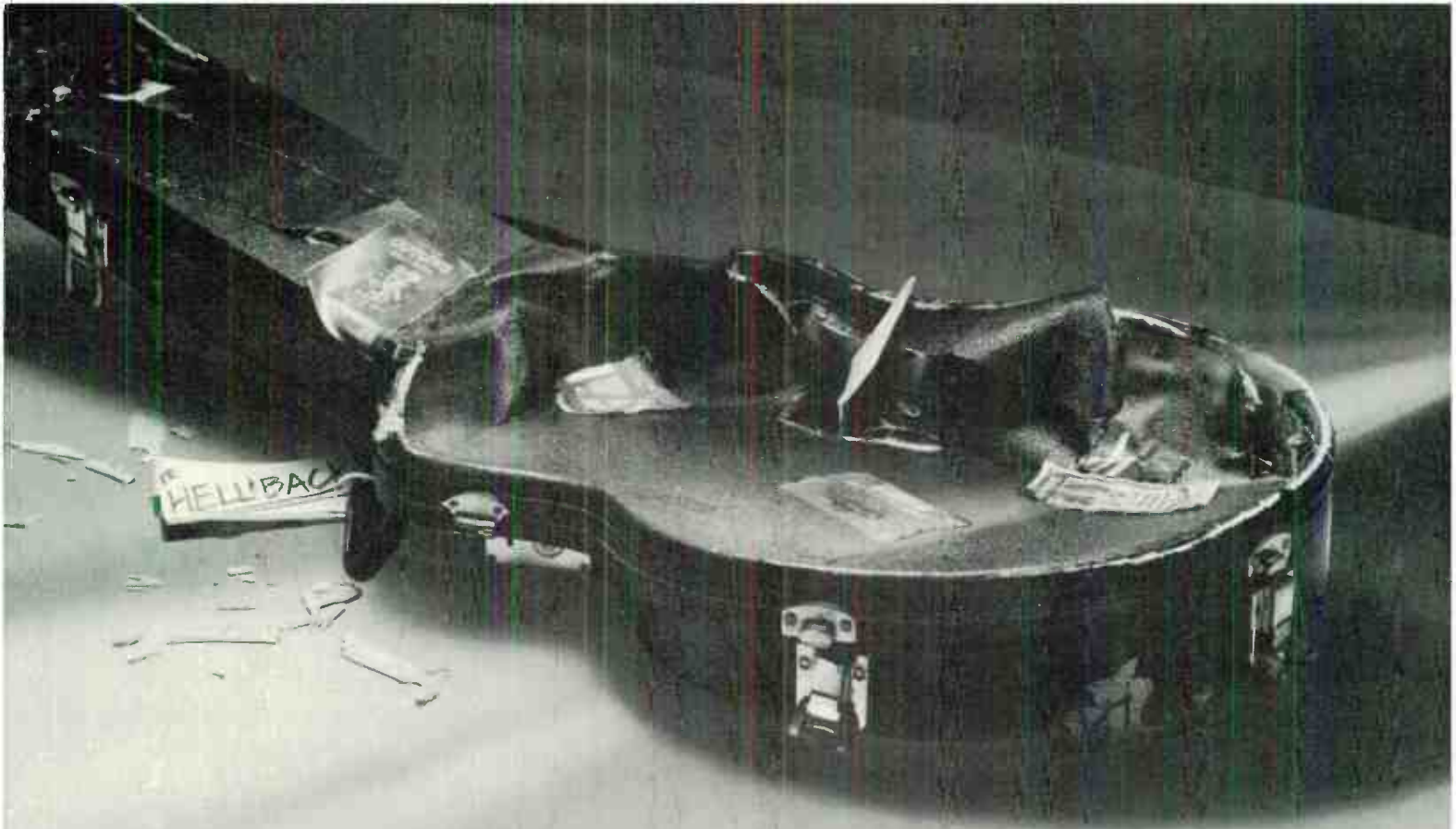
MORRISON: I haven't had any calls about that. I don't know. I mean, most people know the way I work, the way I operate—the length and all that. I haven't heard from anybody.

MUSICIAN: *Maybe they're waiting to hear from you.*

MORRISON: Well, if they don't do anything till they hear from me, to quote Ellington (laughter), they won't hear from me.

VANGUARD

Van Morrison plays a Selmer Mark VI alto sax with a Greg Larson mouthpiece. At home he has a Yamaha piano. For guitar: "At the moment I'm using an Ibanez, George Benson model, which I find does the job. It's electric, but it's built semi-acoustic. It's the only one I found that does what I want."



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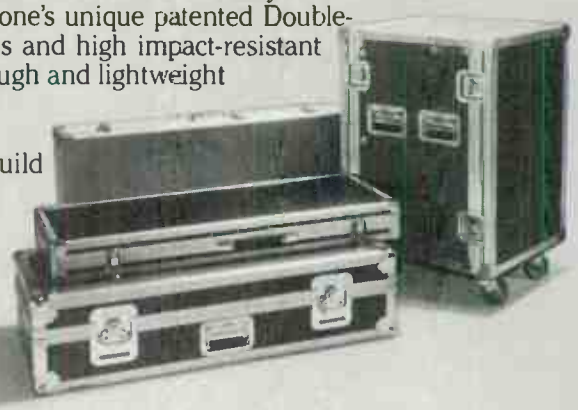

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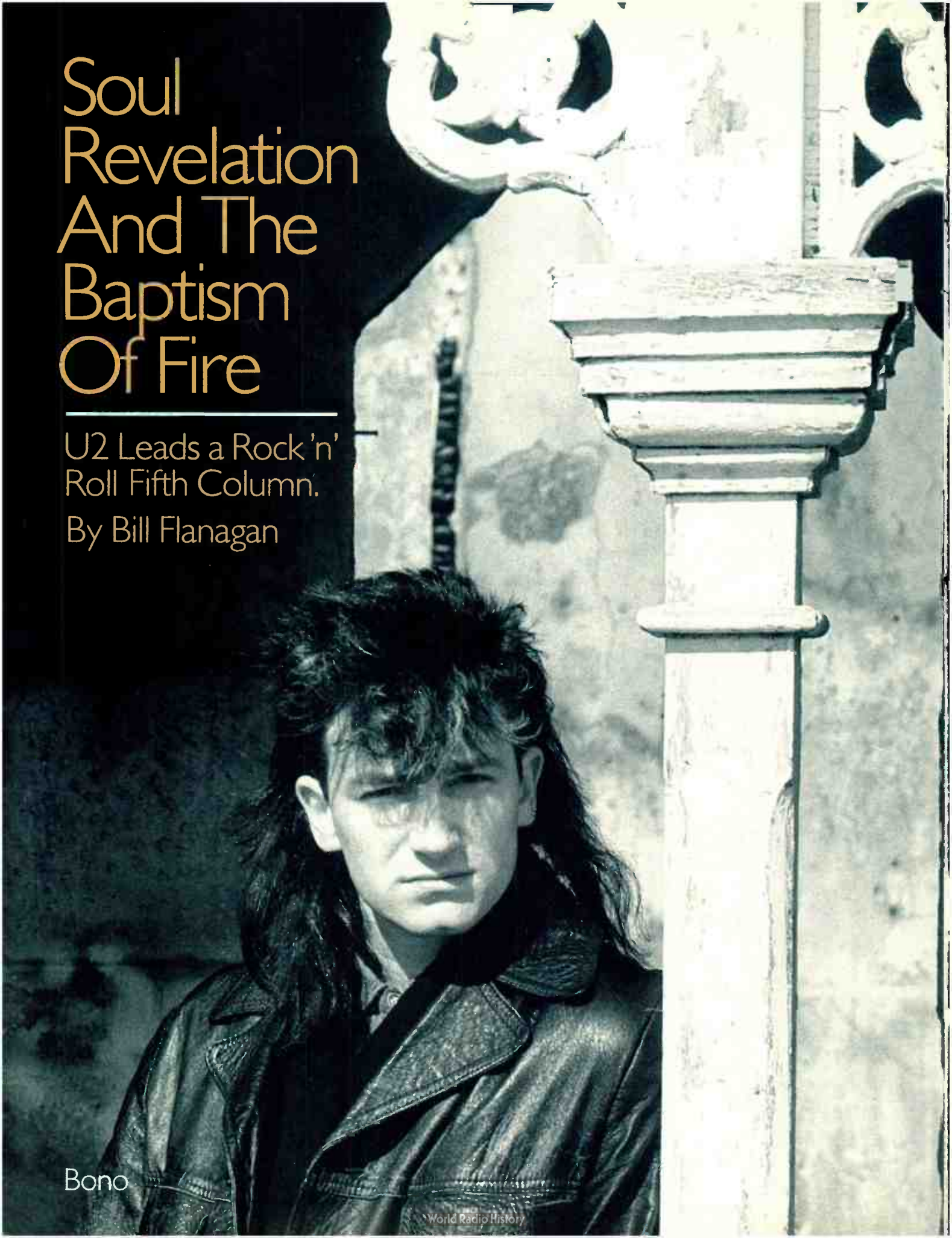
Soul Revelation And The Baptism Of Fire

U2 Leads a Rock 'n' Roll Fifth Column.

By Bill Flanagan



Bono

U2

When Paul "Bono" Hewson was in the Irish equivalent of high school, he decided that the compulsory study of Gaelic, the ancient Irish language, was foolish. "Being the obstreperous little git that I am," U2's singer/lyricist explains, "I refused point blank to do it. I would bring German books into Irish class just for the sheer hell of it. When a major exam came, I didn't pass. I burned my papers outside the exam hall. I was pretty hard-headed and I thought, 'This language is dead. Why am I learning something that's dead?' I went to university after that, and I was thrown out for not speaking Irish."

Now that he's a world-famous rock star, Bono has second thoughts about that dead language.

"The reason it's dead is because many generations of people killed it. And I was one of them. I have completely come around. It was me that was missing out. Irish poetry brought me around. There are sounds in the Irish language that aren't there in English. Having rebelled against it for so long, right now I'm very interested in the Irish language."

The story is vintage Bono, at once self-righteous and self-deprecating. Who else would take such delight in recounting how bold and stubborn he was, only to conclude that he was also completely wrong?

We're sitting backstage at a

The Edge

concert hall in the south of France. For several days Bono's expertise in French has helped us navigate strange *rues* and order in restaurants.

"I'm interested in German and Spanish," he offers. "I find Spanish one of the easiest languages. 'If the Englishmen hoard their words like misers, the Irish spend them like madmen.' I have a lot of African verse at home, Indian verse, French verse. When a melody comes to me, it comes in sounds. I have to sort through the sounds to find the words. Sometimes I'm left with a big hole where no English words will fit. So I have to find other words."

Bono resorts to what sound like Indian syllables in the middle of "Elvis Presley And America," a song from U2's new LP *The Unforgettable Fire*. Some listeners might not notice; the whole song is a moody mumble that—while sounding nothing like any record Presley ever made—captures a piece of his spirit. "Elvis Presley And America" is about reconciling apparent contradictions: joy and despair, genius and inarticulation, humble Christian continence and boastful rock abandon. It's split right down the middle. It's typical U2.

Bono's been keeping fast company. He and Van Morrison joined Bob Dylan onstage in Ireland recently. Bono dislikes talking about it, but a friendship between the young singer and Dylan seems to be blooming. Dylan and Morrison believe in the muse, that songs come through the singer from somewhere else. Does Bono feel that way about his own work?

"It *feels* like the songs are already written," he smiles. "But our songs are too human for me to be so arrogant as to claim that they were written in the air. I do believe the musician doesn't own the music, that it is a gift. *I* believe it is a gift of God—to any musician: guys on the street, traveling musicians, tinkers, gypsies. Music expresses the inexpressible. All our songs are about that, about inarticulation: 'I *try* to sing this song.' 'Elvis Presley And America' is just a mumble. All are about *trying* to express things."

U2's onstage and Bono's screaming, "TOU-LOUUUSE! TOU-LOUUUUSE!" The young people of Toulouse, France, some of whom speak English, go wild. Dave Evans, the guitarist everyone calls the Edge, manages also to cover piano, lap steel and synths, filling in all the dynamics a U2 record captures with many overdubs. Drummer Larry Mullen kicks the band's spacier songs into the material world, and occasionally tosses in a Led Zep change-up. Bassist Adam Clayton drifts in the sonic space between the Edge and Larry, sometimes adding aural shimmer, sometimes popping strings to hit the beat on the head.

Afterward the band piles into their tour bus. The Edge sits back and closes his eyes. Mullen asks where Dennis Sheehan, the road manager, is. "He's outside giving those girls your birthdate," the Edge lies.

"He's not!"

"Yes he is." The Edge doesn't move a muscle. His eyes remain closed. But a smile crosses his mouth. Sheehan climbs on the bus and Mullen, now sullen, demands to know if he gave those girls his birthdate. Sheehan goes along with the gag and says yes he did. Mullen gets more upset. The girls, it seems, are witches.

"They're making voodoo dolls of you, Lawrence," the Edge deadpans. "They're going to bite the legs off the dolls!" pipes up Bono as he climbs aboard. Like Larry and Edge, he's an evangelical Christian who doesn't dig witchcraft.

Adam Clayton is not twice-born. He boards the bus smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer. "I don't know why I'm never recognized," he announces. There is laughter all around. "I saw two girls waiting by the bus and I thought, right, I'll give 'em a good chat. And they ignored me!"

"A prophet without honor, Adam," Bono judges.

The Edge opens his eyes a slit and tells Bono, "Those two witches were outside looking to make a voodoo doll of you."

"Not the same two who were at soundcheck?"

"Yes. They've already got your birthdate."

Bono sighs. "Then they must be sticking pins in their calendar." The shade Bono's leaning against flies up, causing the fans outside to jump and wave. "Their magic is working already."

U2 has run into trouble before, but it hasn't impeded the band's steady progress. The four Dubliners got together as teenagers in 1976, attracted by a notice Mullen posted in school. After gaining a local following they signed to Island Records in 1980 and released *Boy*, an album that sounded like guitar-rock drenched in echo and sent for a spin-dry in the Twilight Zone. While the Edge, Clayton and Mullen flailed away, Bono intoned lyrics evocative of adolescent moods and yearnings.

The group's follow-up album, *October*, now appears as a lesser work. Mitigating circumstances: Bono's lyrics were stolen during a U2 tour, and the singer virtually extemporized what's on the record. *War*, 1983's studio release, solidified U2's reputation as a band with a conscience; *Under A Blood Red Sky*, a subsequent live mini-album, consolidated it. U2 wasn't just loud—they were *stirring*.

"Music is magical, mysterious. It's not a production line."

The Unforgettable Fire lunged up record charts with all the momentum of a band at peak form delivering what the fans want. But tell Adam Clayton that the record bears two or three potential hit singles and he'll reply, "I hope not."

That calls for explanation. "To release 'Pride' and have a hit is great," the bassist says. "But I don't want any of the other songs out. The album's important, not the singles that come off it. I'd like it to be viewed as a whole, rather than as 'that album with three hit singles.' I'd like the albums to dictate the way people think about us.

"There is a feeling within the band of consolidating and working material through a sort of 1984 soul music. In the way that Springsteen is soul music, but it's rock 'n' roll soul. Van Morrison is soul music. In the past our live shows had to rely on songs that *impressed* people, because we weren't very well known. Now we have the freedom to expand the whole concept of the band and the songs. We don't have to fight to grab people's ears anymore. We've got them."

"To me," Bono offers, "soul music is not about being black or white or the instrument you play or about a particular chart or map." We are seated in the back of the tour bus. Outside the fields, vineyards, castles and farms of southern France are flying by. "A singer becomes a soul singer when he decides to reveal rather than conceal. When he takes what's on the inside and brings it to the outside. I suppose," Bono smiles, "that what I take from the inside is a little more tangled up than most people. So it may not communicate as directly as Bruce does. I'm in awe of the way Bruce Springsteen can communicate directly with people."

A lot of Bruce/Van soul comes through on U2's new album. When Bono steps out under a white spotlight to sing the first lines of "Bad" over chiming, ethereal music, it's hard not to think of the opening of "Thunder Road" or "Backstreets." But *Unforgettable Fire*'s sound is not that of "Born To Run" or "Domino," let alone the straight-ahead rock 'n' roll of *War* and *Under A Blood Red Sky*. It's an introspective dream like "Listen To The Lion" or "New York City Serenade."

Last year's *War* and the live *Under A Blood Red Sky* were straight-ahead rock 'n' roll statements that earned U2 a big American audience.

"There's got to be a spiritual link between U2 and Van Morrison," Bono nods. "And I'm sure it's not just that we're both

Irish. I think there's something else. He probably wouldn't want to associate himself with our music, 'cause I know he's plugged into a tradition of soul music and gospel. He may not connect with us."

U2's new record has a song called "4th Of July," just as Morrison has his "Almost Independence Day" and Springsteen his "4th Of July, Asbury Park." But the spiritual connection is most obvious on "Promenade," a lovely song about watching skyrockets explode over a seaside town that ends with Bono intoning, "Radio, radio, radio, radio."

Bono says most of "Promenade"'s Van/Bruce connections were unconscious. He was describing a real place in Ireland. "The song was written in one take. I went to the microphone with a piece of music and just sang it. In some ways it's complete coincidence. The 'radio' image just came to me—and obviously I turned it into that Van lick: 'Radio, radio, radio.'

"I know some people have problems with the gray area of the lyrics, but after coming from the black and white of *War* I wanted to retreat into the gray again. The emotions that are on this record are very abstract, out of focus, fragmented, its words are gray. But that is *exactly* what it should be.

"It just seems that in 1984 in pop music, in rock 'n' roll, everything is spelled out. There is no mystery, no attention to the magical side of music. If there's one thing I re-learned from working with Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois it's that music is magical. It is not production line. Americans have to watch out for this, because there's a very strong music industry in the United States. Some people in that industry talk a lot about formulas. Radio's divided into AOR, CHR, R'n'R, R&B. There's a danger of people thinking in terms of platinum and gold. This record is stepping back from that."

U2's *War* featured a straight-ahead guitar/bass/drum approach and headline lyrics (heavily influenced by John Lennon LPs like *Some Time In New York City*) in reaction against the high-gloss pop mood music then dominating the British charts. They couldn't anticipate that the album would make *them* trendsetters, leading a stampede of hearty guitar bands like Big Country and the Alarm. What U2 did was nothing less than channel the unharnessed energy of guitar-based power-rock for a more constructive message than the usual sex 'n' drugs 'n' rock 'n' roll bill of fare.

"There are few instruments that get across aggression as well as a distorted guitar," Bono said in a 1983 interview; "it's physically brutalizing. The power of a rock 'n' roll concert is that it stimulates you emotionally, as you follow the singer, and physically, as you dance and are hit by the music. It also has a cleansing effect; it's a great release.

"The brutalizing effect of guitar has been used in a very negative direction at times. But our aggression is much warmer, much more communicative than that."

Nowadays Bono has a little perspective on what U2 hath wrought. "We didn't know that we'd be at the front of a whole *movement* of guitar and optimism," he sighs. "When that happened we had to step back and redress the balance."

"It's difficult to handle," the Edge says of U2's new vanguard status. "We never intended becoming part of a movement. Movements can be very restrictive. Very early on we were linked with a whole psychedelic revival. Now in the States it's this Positive Vision movement—the re-emergence of the guitar and that sort of thing. Whenever we felt on the verge of becoming a caricature of ourselves we've always done something different.

"This whole idea of the new guitar bands, the new guitar heroes is *terrible*. But I would be proud to be thought of as in the same genre as Simple Minds, simply because I think the uplifting quality they have is so great."

"The Unforgettable Fire" was the title of an exhibition of paintings by survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Obviously U2 are also conscious of the title's invocation of the Christian Pentecost, the baptism of fire in which the Holy Spirit entered the apostles.

KEES TABAK/SIPA PRESS

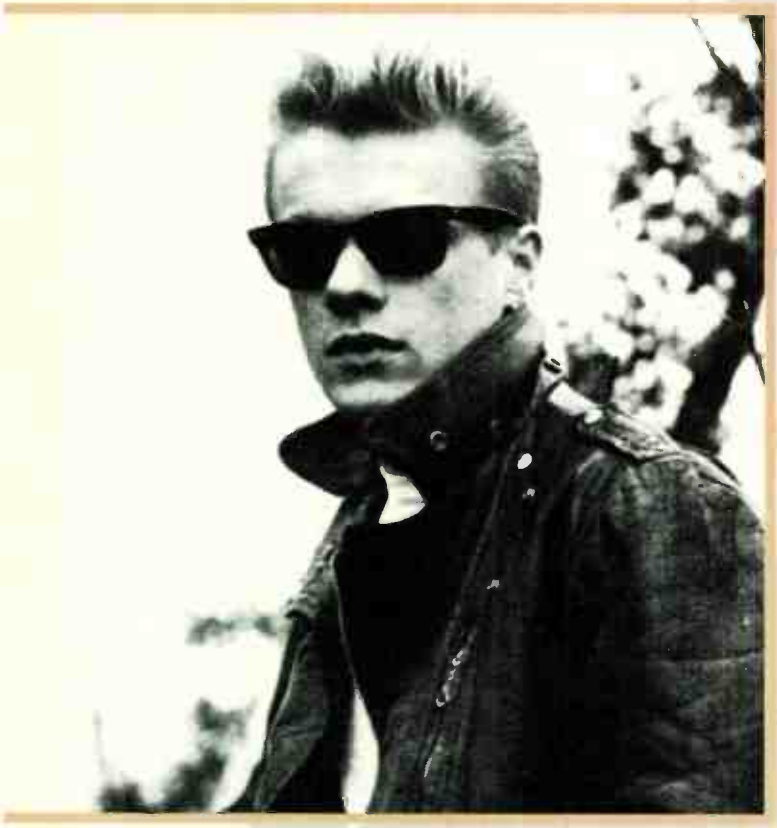
Bono toned down his onstage antics after several court-martials.

But *The Unforgettable Fire* mostly refers to obsessive passion. "Pride (In The Name Of Love)" and "MLK" find this passion at its greatest in Martin Luther King. King, after all, was a charismatic, powerfully articulate, righteous Christian pacifist—all that Bono admires exemplified in one man. That the fire has two sides, consuming as well as liberating, is explored in "Elvis Presley And America." That song's protagonist, Bono explains, "was unsure of himself intellectually when he *should* have been sure! Elvis could say more in somebody else's song than Albert Goldman could say in any book!"

Bono says he writes his lyrics instinctively, and only later discovers what his songs are really about. He admits he's just realized that "Bad" and "The Unforgettable Fire" are both partly about that darkest passion, heroin. The drug has found a sizable market among the melancholy Irish, and U2 are finding old friends with holes in their arms.

"I'm not saying that's what those songs are completely about," Bono says carefully. "I don't want to tie them down. Not having been a junkie I didn't want to write about junk. But I suppose, living on the street where I live, seeing people that I've kicked football with have their lives rearranged by this love of a drug, it just seeped subconsciously into the record."

Might Bono also have been writing about how his old



Larry Mullen, drummer in the material world.

friends now see *him*? For he too is a man changed by obsession: obsession with music and obsession with the Divine.

"I suppose that I've been musically obsessed," Bono says slowly. "I don't know. I'm not clear. I only share these thoughts with you because I'm starting to become clear on *those*. I'm sure I'll learn a lot more as we play the songs."

As the bus pulls into Bordeaux, Bono inserts a cassette of Springsteen's *Born In The U.S.A.* and rocks down the aisle. Driving into a stately old French city, a bunch of Irishmen affect American accents to sing "Drivin' Into Darlington County." At the next concert Bono will first sing U2's "Gloria" and then Van Morrison's. The rock 'n' roll nation recognizes no boundaries.

These French concerts, performed to crowds of eight or nine thousand in sports arenas, are the best U2 shows I've ever seen. The band's early club dates were exciting but suffered a bit from lack of dynamics: *Boy*'s songs were of a single mood, and the group lacked finances to get a variety of sounds from one guitar, bass and drums.

Later American shows, especially some concerts last year in big halls, benefited from three albums' worth of material but ran into an unexpected problem: Bono's distracting penchant for excessive showmanship. He leapt into audiences and scurried up balconies. Kids went crazy and U2 fans understood the communal motivation behind the broad gestures. But the half-converted were often appalled.

As a U2 fan I often found myself defending the group against charges of bombast, of egomania, of being a hip Journey. I remember the look of astonishment on one musician's face when he saw the "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" video: "This guy is marching up and down the stage *waving a flag*!" Something was getting lost in the translation.

It's a great relief, then, to find Bono staying onstage in France and letting the music do the talking. U2 shows, which once came on like frontal attacks, now move in waves; the level swells, falls and swells again.

"It was very important for Bono to realize he didn't need to do all that," Clayton says of the onstage antics. "By now we're playing for people who already believe in the band. They just want to see him perform the songs."

"It was also," the Edge adds, "a gesture that made sense to the front row. It was Bono saying, 'I can get to you, I can be with you.' But the cynics at the back of the auditorium said, 'That's a bit cornball.' Now we're turning our eyes to the cynics, to the world-weary music fans, nonmusic fans, and critics as well. We're approaching them in a more subtle way. We'll be communicating directly through our work. I'm excited about that prospect."

"You can't fill a large stadium physically," Clayton adds. "You have to fill it with music."

Bono remembers his partners' reaction to his onstage exhibitions. "I was getting phone calls from the band after concerts—phone calls at two in the morning where I'd have to go in and face a *court martial*. They were saying, 'You're either going to kill yourself, or somebody else, or the band.'

"In the Los Angeles arena I went into the crowd with a white flag and it was torn to pieces. I ended up in a fistfight with a member of the audience, which is a *real* contradiction. Then I half fell from the balcony. It started a bit of a riot. [*L. A. Times* critic] Robert Hilburn wrote, 'The music doesn't *need* this.' And he was right."

But Bono still feels strongly that if his methods were wrong, his intentions were right. He wanted to break down the barrier between performer and audience, to raise a white flag as a gesture against division, against nationalism, against war. When he sang "Surrender!" he meant everyone should refuse to kill for any flag. The problem is that onstage Bono resembles less Gandhi than a charismatic figure demanding his arena-full of fist-waving fans surrender—to *him*.

Bono looks shocked at the suggestion. "The principle of 'surrender' is both political and personal," he explains. "I also meant it as dying to your ego.

"There are two types of musicians. Some people I meet put in their cassette and say, 'Listen! Amn't *I* somethin'?' Others go, 'Listen! Isn't *it* somethin'?' I suppose I have those two people in me, and I've been trying to shake the first one off.

"People in the band seem to think I'm an odd combination of a person who doesn't believe in himself and a person who believes in himself too much. I'm like anybody else; I'm a mass of contradictions. I just try to be myself. And most of our songs are about failure in that respect: 'I fall down.' It's a lot more about picking yourself up from the dirt than about standing there with hands held up, triumphant. I suppose when we're onstage, that's the moment of triumph. But the songs themselves are not like that. I can't be seen as any kind of spokesman. I mean, how can you be a spokesman if all you're saying is 'Help!'"

"When we started playing," Clayton explains one evening, "music was very much the secondary thing. We liked each other and got a lot of fun out of it as a social situation. Now we realize that individually we probably wouldn't have gone anywhere musically. We enjoy the people we're with and realize that without any one of us the fragile uniqueness and specialness of U2 would be gone forever. It's an idealistic approach to music. We have rows; everybody who lives together has rows. But they're always rows based on the belief of what we *can* do, where the music's going."

"The band is a family," the Edge adds. "Everyone looks after everyone else and no individual ego is bared to the public. There's a *band* ego, there's a *band* ambition. There's a band arrogance as well, sometimes. And there's also a belief that contemporary music can be more than just a soundtrack. It can be worthwhile and lasting, with a timeless quality when it's really working. It should transcend any barriers of time or location, so anyone can find something in it, so that it doesn't

exclude people by being too fixed in its context. A lot of pop music is very fixed. It only makes sense if you know what happens to be hip in New York or London that week. I'm sick of music like that."

On Sunday U2 has a night off. While Clayton stays in bed, recuperating from an especially late Saturday, Bono, the Edge and Mullen explore Bordeaux. The ancient city seems to stretch out for miles in every direction. Narrow, winding streets open into great cathedral squares before zig-zagging down to the river. Walking avenue after avenue, U2 comes to the moving lights of a carnival, stretched out in front of a great fountain and bathed in the glow of the biggest ferris wheel they've ever seen.

Bono, the most recognizable member of U2, has tucked his wild mane into a tight painter's cap. He refers to this as his "nerd disguise" and looks like a Robin Williams character. It serves him well until the group comes to the shooting gallery. Everyone gets pellet rifles except Edge, who for some reason is given a .22. As Edge splinters wooden targets, Bono, excited, yells over the recoil, "Yeah, Edge! Go, Edge!"

That lets the cat out of the bag. How many young men in Bordeaux are named "Edge"? And how many speak English? French kids start turning and pointing to the Irishmen at the shooting gallery. "Ur Dur! Ur Dur!" ("U Deux": "U2" *en francais*).

"Ur Dur?"

GUITAR PRIDE

Bono unleashes his primal howl through a Shure SM58 vocal microphone. The band's P.A. is by Clair Brothers audio.

The Edge has a lot of guitars these days: a 1971 Fender Strat with a graphite nut, brass bridge saddles, modified Seymour Duncan quarter pound stack pickup and Strat Tremolo. More standard are his 1971 Gibson Explorer, an early-60s Les Paul Deluxe (used only on "Indian Summer Sky") and 1961 Telecaster. He also plays a new Washburn acoustic. On "Pride" he plays a 1959 Gretsch Falcon, with stereo pickups he rewired to mono. He also uses an Epiphone Elektra lap steel (1939 or '40) which he picked up real cheap in the U.S. His amps are an old Vox AC30 and Mesa Boogies, MK-II C series. His lap steel and Yamaha CP70, though, go through a Roland JC120 amp. His strings are Superwound Selectras.

He selects effects with a Boss SCC 700. These include two Korg SDD 3000 Digital Delays, a Yamaha R-1000 digital reverb, an MXR pitch transposer and a Yamaha D-15 digital delay. There are also two Electro Harmonix Memory Man analog delays: one side is used for the CP70, the other for the lap steel on "Surrender." He uses an MXR Compressor and thanks the Lord for his Boss TU-12 Tuner. What would you do if you had so much guitar equipment? How about taking up keyboards? The Edge did; he pounds a Yamaha DX7 and CP70, and Oberheim OB-8 and DSX.

Adam Clayton plays a Fender Precision, Ibanez Musician and Fender Jazz bass through an Ampeg SVT bass head (used just as a pre-amp) and four Harbinger cabinets with four 15-inch Gauss speakers. He uses JBL 2410 high frequency drivers, two BGW 750Bs and a BGW 250B. That's not all. What about that Furman parametric equalizer and two-way crossover? And dig those Moog Taurus pedals, hooked to a Boss SCC 700 effects selector, Ibanez UE 400 and Ibanez HD 1000 digital delay! All this is rigged up to two Alembic pre-amps. Freedom of movement? Clayton has plenty, courtesy of a Nady 700 series wireless system.

Larry Mullen plays Yamaha drums, the Power Recording series. He uses a 24-inch bass drum, a 14-inch rack tom, two 16-inch floor toms, one 18-inch floor tom and a 14x6½-inch snare. He has two piccolo snares—one by Ludwig and one by Eddie Ryan, an Irishman who runs a London drum shop—and two Lapin timbales. His cymbals are Paiste: a 2002 18-inch crash, two Rude 18-inch crashes, one 20-inch Rude crash, a 20-inch 2002 Chinatop, and a pair of 14-inch Sound Edge hi-hats.

Mullen uses all Yamaha hardware, Evans drum heads (usually Black Golds), and sticks designed by Cappella Wood in New Jersey. He occasionally uses a Simmons SDS7 triggered by his acoustic drums. He uses a click track (triggered from Edge's Oberheim DX) on "Unforgettable Fire" and "Bad."

Mullen shakes his head no and the band moves quickly down the midway. Bono spots a tent promising oddities of nature and zips in, leaving Mullen and the Edge outside.

Suddenly all the fun goes out of the fair. Lined up before him are glass jars containing monkeys, mummies and human fetuses in formaldehyde: siamese twins, a human baby with a fishtail sewed on. Bono's face goes gray. In the midst of this depravity sits a dwarf in a three-piece suit, cleaning his fingernails with a knife. He never looks up. Around his feet the dirt is littered with *centimes*.

Bono walks, as if asleep, outside where Mullen and the Edge are laughing. Finally he says softly, "I've never seen anything like that in my life." The park P.A. is blasting "Pride (In The Name Of Love)." As we leave the carnival a barker is shouting into a microphone, "Ur Dur! Ur Dur!"

At the next night's concert U2 performs "The Unforgettable Fire," a song that describes "Carnival/the wheels fly and colors spin/through alcohol, red wine."

Bono speaks to the crowd: "When we reached the top of wherever we were going—with the *War* record and *Under A Blood Red Sky*—we felt we had to make *another* statement.

"Last night we came into Bordeaux. We walked around the city and we came to this carnival. There was this big wheel at the carnival. We got on and we went right up to the top of it. We could see all over this city, Bordeaux."

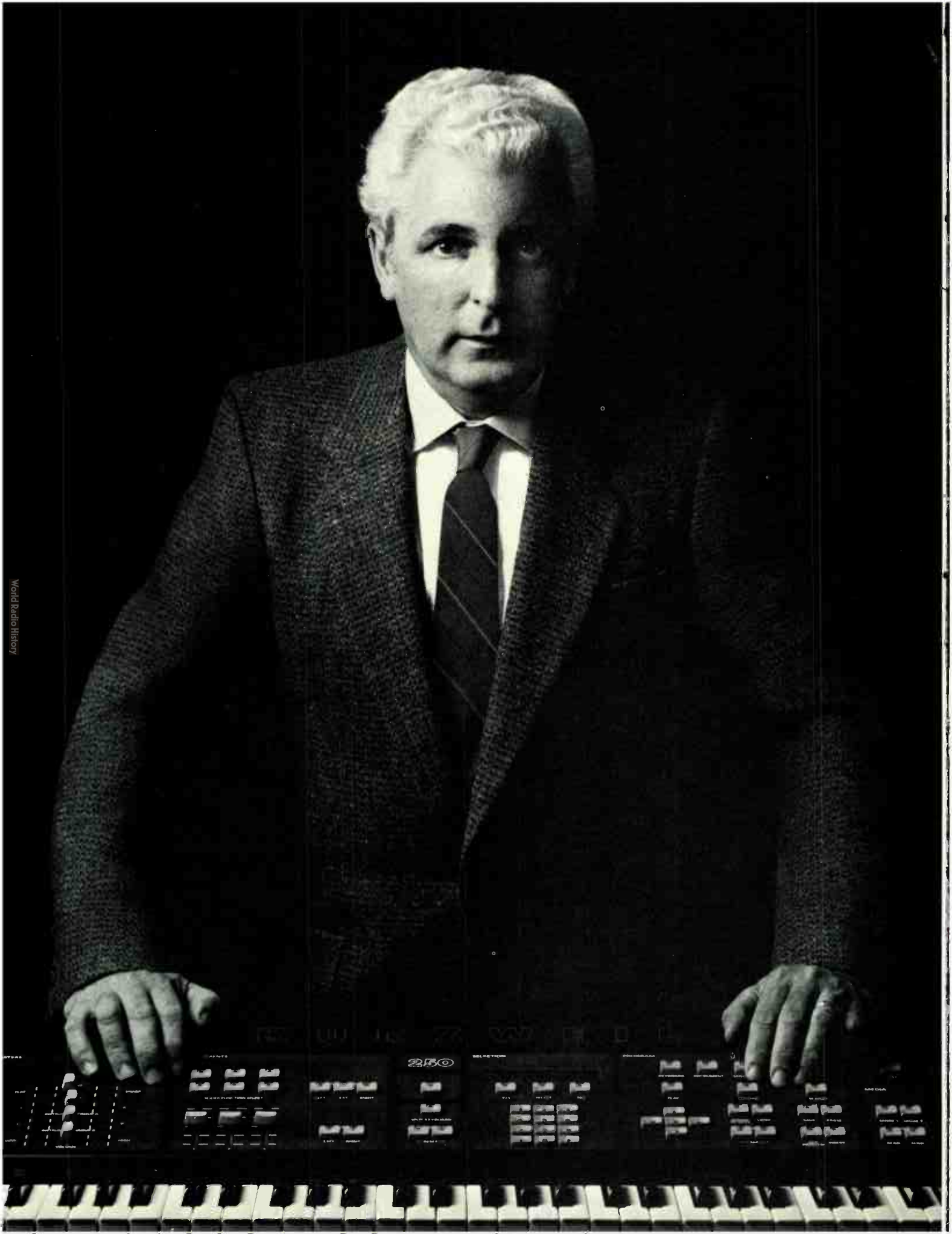
The kids cheer and then sit transfixed. The carnival was a wild mix of good and bad, but Bono is making it a symbol of something beautiful.

"So often we don't get to really see a city. Sometimes when you're travelin' a lot, you're goin' in and out of hotel and hotel, another room and another room, more people and more people. You just forget that..."

He pauses. "We have a pretty good job, actually." The crowd cheers and the band smiles. "This is for some of you who don't feel so good. I'm sure you will."

Adam Clayton: "We don't have to fight to get people's ears anymore."

KEES TARAK/SIPA PRESS



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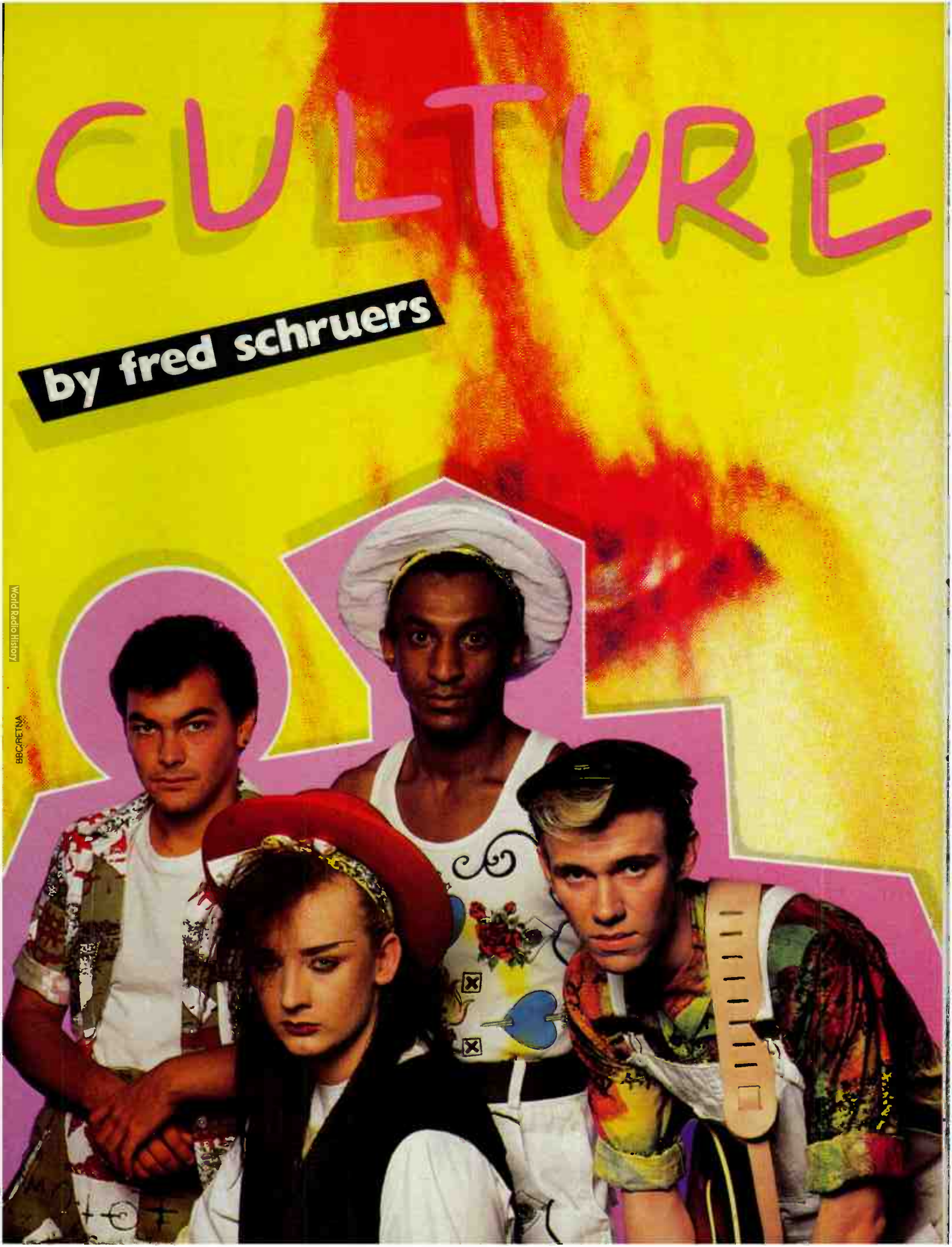
CULTURE

by fred schruers



Is anybody in control here?" asks the man they call Boy. He's been sitting patiently in a North London Holiday Inn while cameras go crazy, swiveling his black-wigged head back and forth with the imperious patience of a caged raven. Now, though, he wants this photo opportunity to end.

"Somebody send this guy home," he says with a flip of his hand at an especially persistent Asian Nikon jockey. "He's got bad hearing." The frantic kissing sound of one last motor-drive stops. George waits several uncomfortable beats for the reporters to go to work. "Are you going to ask questions," he snaps, "or sit there like fools?"

Some fifty members of the European press, looking indeed a mite foolish, don't know where to begin. They're holding copies of Culture Club's just-released single, "The War Song," whose astoundingly familiar thesis ("war is stupid") seems to leave them speechless. Finally a German-accented question: Isn't "The War Song" more than a little similar in content to Frankie Goes To Hollywood's "Two Tribes"? Everybody present knows George has verbally scourged the Frankie boys many times.

"Because Frankie writes about war, I can't?" George demands. "I've had sex in bed as well," he states acidly. "I suppose that's not original."

And the Boy is off and running—settling scores, dishing trash, jabbing, sparring and joking as he holds the floor. He's flanked by Culture Club drummer Jon Moss and keyboard/guitar player Roy Hay; absent bassist Mikey Craig has "entered the Leisure Age," Moss explains. But George hungrily seizes most of the questions. That's the pesky issue hanging over the band as they release their third album: How does this manifestly clever quartet reconcile themselves to their singer's outsize notoriety as the global symbol of androgyny?

George is not letting that issue slow him down today. He asserts that Culture Club's new album, *Waking Up With The House On Fire*, is thoroughly autobiographical. The title refers to running out "naked" to face sudden and overwhelming celebrity. "The Medal Song" concerns the self-destructive bent of ill-starred actress Frances Farmer, one of George's heroines, along with Elizabeth Taylor and Dolly Parton. He's working on a song for the Beach Boys in the studio

with Culture Club producer Steve Levine and thinks the American band, with their emphasis on melodies, quite resembles his own. He acknowledges meeting Keith Richard recently; George says the Stones guitarist was "nice to me," but tags him "a dinosaur...looks like an actor from the *Thriller* video."

Despite repeated questions, George refuses to apologize for monopolizing his band's public image: "I'd rather be bigheaded than boring." Yes, someone replies, but to the extent of having his photo, alone, on the new single sleeve? "Good question," Hay says, poking the air with his finger. "He's a benevolent dictator," Moss says, easing the tension. "Fame," the drummer adds, "is like a pact with the devil."

If George and his bandmates made such a pact, they didn't sell out cheap. Fifteen million copies of their first two albums have staked out an avid worldwide constituency, who by and large find the Boy's sexually inexplicit persona not at all threatening. The public's admiration of sweet singing and accomplished scams has made George the doted-upon cynosure of talk show hosts. Culture Club's singles are uncannily accessible pastiches of other people's styles—"plagiarism," George happily calls it. The formula is no more sophisticated or adventurous than vanilla yogurt with sugar and a new French name. But somehow, alongside most top forty junk-food, it feels healthy. And whatever you think of George's music and dress code, his tea-time chattiness is oddly reassuring. "That big poof!" my London cabbie said when I told him who I'd been interviewing. Then he changed his tone without prompting: "Quite intelligent, innit he?"

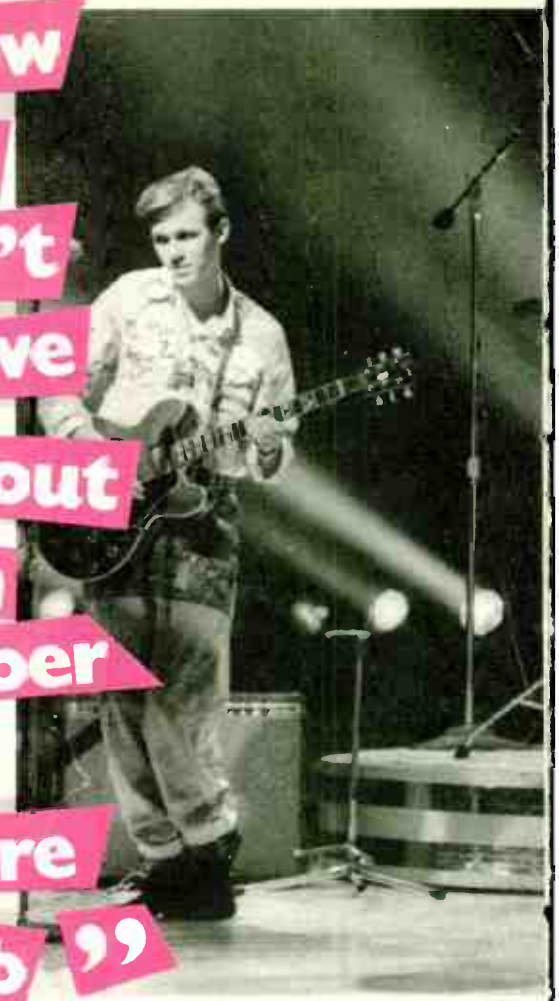
Yes, indeed. Like most benevolent dictators, George is intelligent enough to give the populace their circus and simultaneously defuse any palace coups. When it comes to the crucial distribution of his kingdom's spoils, he's an absolute democrat: songwriting credits and record royalties are split evenly four ways. The financial equality (George does take proceeds from clearly personalized items like Boy George dolls) preserves a combative unity through considerable infighting over artistic issues. "A group absolutely has more potency than a solo artist," George says. "A group is like a family; you can stick together. It obviously has something to do with my being brought up in a big Irish family. I do like to be around people I care about and trust."

Virgin, Culture Club's British label, has rented a fancy suite of rooms on Grosvenor Square, amid embassies and old money. There in the half-light through a mansard window George sits talking, indefatigably and earnestly. Confined to a straight-backed chair, his jolly, Pierrot-like movements are reduced to fidgety attempts to wedge his foot onto the brass pull of a desk drawer. Off-white foundation makeup sets off his crimson lipstick and black eyeliner. His wig is a jet-black, post-punk bird's nest, and his manner effeminate only at the very edges. He exhibits a ferocious drive to batter you with his unfathomability—quite a trick for the son of a South London building contractor.

George has a direct gaze and, in strange contrast to his velvety singing, an audible bronchial wheeze. Candid and loquacious, he's still far from chummy. His humanism can sound over-rehearsed: "When I go onstage the only thing I am trying to project is humor. It's humor that's missing from this world—real, affectionate humor. I don't mean I go laughing at myself. I'm quite serious about what I'm doing. But I wish to project immense affection."

"I have to sit there and listen to what George says quite often," Roy Hay says. "And especially at that press conference I thought he was incredibly outspoken. It's like a show, you have to make people laugh. I guess you have to blame the Beatles, when they started and did those press things. The music gets two sentences and sexuality gets half-hour discussions.

"i know that i can't survive without each member of culture club"



"Occasionally we'll sit in a room watching him on television and wonder, 'Why aren't we all on it?' But we don't really mean it. People do relate Culture Club to George's face. He's a strange guy. I can't do the things he does, and he can't do the things I do either. That's why we're together. He's a great singer and a great songwriter. If he could play an instrument, I think he wouldn't have a band. But he always has a lot of ideas that need sifting through. We get our input. It's like, 'Things like videos, image, stage, you get on with it. I'll arrange the song for you. I do my bit, you do yours.'"

"Last year," George says, "Roy didn't really consider me a musician. We used to have a lot of rows about that. And I started working with [session man and ex-Sailor keyboardist] Phil Pickett on some songs because Roy was really rude to me in Japan. He said, 'You don't even know what key the songs are in.' And I said, 'Well, fuck you, try writing songs without me.' And he knows that he can't, and I know that I can't survive without each member of Culture Club. I mean, Mikey may be lazy but he's a brilliant bass player. Roy is a really good keyboard player and a brilliant guitarist, and Jon's great. It's just that everybody has learned to trust each other."

"We try to keep it on a very fair basis," Moss says, "which some people think is really stupid, but I think it's really important. Band situations are something you should jealously guard. You have to be very careful. There are always people who, when you're successful, will try to break it up for selfish reasons. Luckily since George is surrounded by three strong leaders he won't get like Adam Ant, who sacked his band. That was a very stupid thing to do, otherwise Adam would still be a big star."

Can George really mean it when he claims he and his bandmates are everyday people? The same Boy and Co. who put

The Club (l. to r.): Roy Hay, Boy George, Mikey Craig

RETNA. CHRIS WALTER

Fleet Street into the biggest, most prolonged rock 'n' roll paroxysm since Beatlemania? Surprisingly, the four Culture Clubbers do share a homey ordinariness, though their geographical, ethnic and financial backgrounds are a mismatch.

"We're all totally different, right down to the color of our eyes," Jon Moss notes. Moss, though thoroughly amiable and warm, is anything but a romantic. He was born out of wedlock and took his surname from his adoptive father, wealthy owner of several clothes shops. But Jon, like George, would quit school early. "I always wanted to be in bands, but when I left school it was so difficult, because it was the era of supergroups—all these over-thirty, fantastic technical musicians. And there I was with my Ringo Starr drum kit. I'd go to auditions and hear, 'Where's the rest of your drum kit?'"

The onset of punk in 1976 saved the day. "I had the mentality for punk: aggressive, but quite a bit of expertise as well. So I was going to make a very good punk rock drummer and a very mediocre jazz-funk drummer." Moss went through a roll-call of elite punk outfits, including the Clash ("They would play tricks on me"), his own short-lived London, and the Damned.

Some early Adam Ant sessions followed, but Adam's tragic flaw ("excessive ego, in an oddly introverted way") led Moss to move on. One day in 1981 he got a call from George, asking him to audition. George's gender-bashing sweep through clubland and the media in 1977-80 has been documented exhaustively. His singing aspirations bubbled up when Malcolm McLaren, in one of his puppetmaster manipulations of Bow Wow Wow, brought him onstage briefly as Lieutenant Lush. Mikey Craig was in the audience for that show. Raised in Hammersmith by Anglo-Jamaican parents, Craig had been jamming (on a guitar a friend stole and lent to him) with his brother Greg, who played in Funkapolitan. Mikey was sufficiently impressed by George to approach him as he deejayed at a nightclub. The two eventually formed Sex Gang Children with one Jon Suede on guitar.

At this stage George called Moss. It soon became clear the drummer wasn't in it for laughs. "Jon brought a strict, almost businesslike discipline into the band," Craig recalls. Moss hated the name Sex Gang Children, and insisted that Suede, with whom George was quite friendly, had to go. He got his way on both counts. (George donated "Sex Gang Children" to another, still extant group.) The band began auditioning guitarists. Roy Hay, a lanky blond from suburban Rayleigh, was a practiced player, almost like one of the late-70s technocrats who had scared Moss into punk rock. But he had eclectic tastes and a grounding in black music. He also liked the band's commitment.

Culture Club rehearsed six months before playing their first gig, in October, 1981, at a teenage club called Croc's in Rayleigh. Most of the material that would make up the reggae-tinged *Kissing To Be Clever* was in that set. A Virgin representative was sufficiently impressed at a second Croc's gig in December to arrange a demo session. The results were uneven. For their next demo session, for another record company, they brought in producer Steve Levine, and George decided to shed his Gladys Knight and Smokey Robinson mannerisms and "sound like myself." The changes convinced Virgin, who signed Culture Club and issued two singles, "White Boy" and "I'm Afraid Of Me," which stiffed. The third was "Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?" By late November, 1982, Culture Club had the number one single in England. Epic Records, the band's U.S. label, figured the song could do equally well in the States, with one small change: a plain white sleeve instead of a photo of the flamboyant Boy.

The group's debut LP sold over one and a half million copies in the States, propelled by three hit singles: the number one "Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?," "I'll Tumble 4 Ya" and "Time (Clock Of The Heart)." The second album, *Colour By Numbers*, spun off three more top ten singles ("Karma Chameleon," "Church Of The Poison Mind" and "Miss Me Blind") on its way to sales of over four million. And George is still steadily chipping away at Michael Jackson's record for magazine cover appearances.

Roy Hay has chosen Gaslight Studios as a meeting place for his solo interview. Located in a Brixton back alley, the low-roofed facility is a former lighting company warehouse that now serves as Culture Club's rehearsal space. A back room glitters with the instrumental spoils of stardom. To either side of Moss' drums are banks of Yamaha synths hooked up to an electric piano and a martial-looking Roland guitar synth.

"I like to run around onstage," Hay says, "so even though I play keyboards on the albums, (sideman) Phillip Pickett will play them onstage. We wouldn't just use a guitar synth as an

effect," he adds, a bit apologetic to be hooked up to so much space-age hardware. "We use the technology to enhance the song, the melody. The melodies we write are so basic we couldn't really have an avant-garde backing anyway.

"When we write as a group all this technical stuff isn't around—just drums, bass, guitar, a keyboard and George. Songs like 'Time' and 'Church Of The Poison Mind' were musical ideas we played to George and he was inspired by them. With 'Church,' Jon wanted to do this sort of Tamla thing with the drums. He did his beat, and I got this organ sound and started playing around the C and G minor chords; it sounded quite good. It was almost like 'The Kids From Fame,' the way it happened. George came in and said, 'I've got this really weird song called "Church Of The Poison Mind,"' and laughed, and—the rest is history."

"George is very sensitive about singing words or melodies that belong to somebody else," says Mikey Craig. "So he brings in the melody or the words. He doesn't actually construct the song because he can't really do that, but if we construct something and if he likes it, well, great; if he doesn't, then we try again. We group around him, and we normally get a rhythm—Jon and I get that together—for the lyrics and melody, and then arrange the chords around that rhythm. Roy may already have an idea, or we may help.

"'Miss Me Blind' was written pretty much from the music, although George was there at the initiation of it. We had this three-chord sequence going, sounded quite nice on the guitar—minor sevenths and things—and we went from there. The only time we're together these days is when we write or when we're onstage. When we record, everybody does their own bit. Me and Jon work out drum patterns and rhythmic arrangements. Then he programs the drum machines and plays the drums, and I program the synthesizers and do the guitars. Mikey will come in during the time I'm in and put some bass on, then bring George in to sing and do backing vocals, which George tends to arranging."

This system ensures that Culture Club no longer stops dead in the studio to fight over arrangements and instrumentation. "There is a real urge for everyone to get their ideas through," Hay says. "We don't have fights. But we have a lot of manic discussions."

"When the band started," Moss recalls, "it was quite a bit like Bow Wow Wow, but better. George just said, 'What do you want to do?' and I said, 'How about if I just play a drum beat and you sing over me?' But it didn't come together until Roy came in. The way we do it now is George will just go, 'La-dee-da'; Roy will play the notes on piano and pick out the main chords, and sort of ask me...I tend to arrange more. But what was invaluable was that Roy's a good musician; he really solidified what was just drums and bass, kind of tribal chants, before that. There was still a lot of percussion, a lot of beat on the first album. On the second album I really laid off and put more effort into arranging than playing. *Waking Up With The House On Fire* is different again because there's much more percussion, much more complex rhythm—I enjoyed that."

"This album was recorded under a lot less pressure than the first two," reflects George. "The first one, you've been together eight months, everyone wants to inject their personality—you're learning in public. The second album was still, I'd take a cassette home every night, listen to it all night. And I even took it on holiday to Egypt and listened to the tracks we were making the whole time. This time, I didn't take the cassettes away, I didn't stick around and aggravate everybody till they wanted to burst, because I can be very impatient and

one-dimensional. I'd be saying, 'no guitar on this track, no brass, I hate brass.' This time I just disappeared and let people do things—let Jon do his drums, because I wanted this album more beaty. 'Hello Goodbye' is almost Led Zeppelin, or African rock, a very heavy pop song. And 'The War Song' is very up, very poppy, very calypso. Though the actual subject matter of the song is quite heavy, the way we broach the subject is quite unusual, which is what we like to do. I think I would draw a comparison with Stevie Wonder's 'Happy Birthday,' which is politically aware but also very happy. It's a clever way of infiltrating people. The song says, 'Love is nothing to some people,' which I think is the basic problem. People really do not know how to love each other.

"'The War Song' is the ultimate, combining statement of what the album's about. It's very much about success, and how people treat you before and after success." The song "Mistake Number 3," George adds, is about the kind of fans who turn cynical when they feel they've outgrown their once-favorite group: "You should never be ashamed of what you've been and done. You know, I'm not ashamed of being a fan of Marc Bolan; I don't have any record in my closet I'm ashamed of. That kind of cynical attitude is created out of the need to impress people, to prove you're an adult.

"So mistake number three is to turn cynical. No, I don't know what mistakes one and two are. Musically, the song's very dreamy, laid back. It's like a lemon meringue—fluffy and slow, laid back. We wrote it the same day as 'The War Song.'"

For George and Club, maybe the biggest question is whether America will turn cynical and outgrow *them*, especially given George's dangerous levels of exposure. Of course, who would've ever predicted his U.S. megastardom in the first place? "One thing about America," George notes, "is that although it's a land of extremes, it can't really cope with extremes. I suppose I'm popular because there really isn't that much indulgence or decadence in what I do. I had a great time down South, and that's the part of America I'd been afraid to go to. I think anybody who's gonna be anti-Boy George is gonna be anti-anything. We're not trying to indoctrinate people. I'm not trying to be a pop Billy Graham.

"But I do have certain beliefs. That's what 'Dive In' is about: 'When you put your pressure down on me, 'cause I don't quite fit your imagery.' Basically I'm saying that everybody—cripples, fat people, black people, people with big noses and glasses—every kind of person wants love. They want somebody to love, you know...'Eyes like a deep blue sea,' is how I put it in the song, 'to dive in.'

"The most important thing is to work on your personality, because we're all gonna get ugly. I definitely want to encourage young people to get off their asses and do something. I get a lot of people writing to me, a real creative influx, and it's amazing how much talent out there never gets fulfilled, never reaches its full potential. A lot of people don't do things because they're afraid they'll fail. Not everyone can be a pop star. But there are certain opportunities that are open to people, and if you have that opportunity and know you have the ability and let it slip by, then it's your tough luck."

That's the down-sized, brotherly George talking. As someone who took the stigma of his own strangeness and made it into opportunity, he's entitled to preach. What George clearly has trouble doing, and he frets about it out loud on *Waking Up*, is reconciling almost monstrous fame with his key, original strength—self awareness—and with his most successful modus operandi—shock value. You can see these forces pulling him back and forth on the video for "The War Song," as George's overly coy grin seems to subvert the song's gran-

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In the bad old days, guitars ruled and keyboards were their docile servants. But with more and more available firepower, the keyboardist came out of the shadows. In the last five years, synthesizers have completely reinterpreted pop and jazz, radically altered our tastes and work habits, even changed our concept of what constitutes a band. This month, a tribute to the now-mighty keyboard.

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herbie hancock

A Man For All Seasons, Be They Heavy or Lighthearted, Hip Jazz or Hip-Hop, Natural or Digital.

by Bill Flanagan

herbie Hancock is the most controversial figure in contemporary progressive music. Even *that* is a controversial assertion. Everything about the forty-four-year-old keyboard player excites argument. Is he a brilliant innovator, bursting boundaries and pumping new life into tired jazz forms by prolific cross-breeding? Or is he a sell-out, a commercial claim-jumper ready to hitch a ride on any hot craze, diluting and vulgarizing real jazz? Only history will ultimately decide if Herbie Hancock is a musical force for good or ill, but no one would disagree that for two decades in the spotlight he's been one hell of a force.

Born in Chicago on March 12, 1940, young Herbert Jeffrey Hancock quickly took to the piano, performing Mozart with the Chicago Symphony when he was all of eleven, and attending Roosevelt University. By the time he hit New York in his early twenties, he was fluent in the accompaniment styles of the two reigning keyboard giants, Miles Davis' Bill Evans and John Coltrane's McCoy Tyner, aided by his particularly strong left hand. Hancock quickly made his presence known by penning a big hit for Mongo Santamaria, "Watermelon Man."

By mid-1963, his reputation earned him a call from Miles himself to come over and play. Miles was then using tenorist George Coleman, was settling in on a new bassist, Ron Carter, and was raving about the young drummer he had just discovered: Tony Williams. Following a day of exploration with the new ensemble, Hancock was asked to return. "After we rehearsed the second day," Herbie told *downbeat* two years later, "Miles told us we were going to do a record in two days. I was wondering what was going on—he hadn't even told me whether I was in the group or not. But I didn't say anything and we did the record, *Seven Steps*. Then we did another rehearsal, and he mentioned a job at Bowdoin College. I said, 'Wait a minute, Miles! You haven't told me if I'm in the group or what,' and he said, 'You made the record, didn't you?' I said, 'Yeah, okay.' He had me jumping through the hoops." Hancock would jump through the hoops as Davis' only pianist for five incendiary years.

Miles at that time was a champion in exile, as freeblow giants like Trane, Ornette, Eric Dolphy and Albert Ayler were rearranging the known universe. Miles frequently savaged free jazz in his interviews (insulting Dolphy only weeks before his death), but was as yet unable to articulate his own statement for the 60s. It was no coincidence that his 1963 band consisted of musicians who had grown up listening to *him*; if anyone could help Miles exponentially extrapolate on Miles, these were the players. The little-known and occasionally maligned vet George Coleman actually served as the catalyst. At the early dates of the new Quintet, Hancock and Williams would adopt a 50s-ish accompani-

photo: Deborah Feingold

ment style for Miles' solos, but on Coleman's solos, Hancock and Williams would kick up the feel, dancing ahead and around the pulses, reacting immediately to any nuances by the soloist. Hancock recalls, "I remember we were at some club in Detroit, and playing all kinds of crazy things behind George, while behind Miles we played really straight. And Miles said afterward, 'Why don't you play like that behind *me*.' That's when Tony and I began playing our little musical games behind Miles. After only *four days*, it turned around and *he* was leading *it*. And Miles began playing different after that. It was the most uncannily rapid adaptation I could ever imagine."

The hitherto almost nonexistent dialogue between jazz soloist and rhythm section became one of the Quintet's most strik-

Herbie-Funk: "I realized I could never be a genius."

ROBERT TEESE

ing innovations, with the Hancock-Williams-Carter axis always probing, reacting, providing spatial changes, flights of tension and release. Another Quintet innovation began to develop in mid-1964, as Wayne Shorter was finally lured away from an irate Art Blakey (and Miles ungraciously sacked the redoubtable Sam Rivers, Coleman's replacement). Shorter's terse, primal tenor style and futurethink imagination triggered a further development of the band's playing, the use of short melody fragments in both heads and solos, themes and phrases that would be echoed and reinterpreted by each instrument. By January of 1965, at the three-day sessions for *E.S.P.*, this new approach had taken hold. Herbie later told *downbeat*, "By the time we got to *E.S.P.*, Miles said, 'I don't want to play chords anymore.' I guess what he wanted was to go to the core of the music. A composition is an example of a conception, so Miles, rather than play the composition, wants to play the conception the composition came from. That's why you hear melody fragments and you kind of hear the momentum and the sound of the tune somehow, but maybe the chords aren't there."

This relaxing of the chordal accompaniment (Wayne Shorter recalls an incident in which Herbie once said, "I don't know what to play anymore!" and Miles replied, "Don't play nothing!") went hand in hand with a departure from the harmonically-based soloing of bop, in which improvised melodies closely follow the chord changes. The Quintet soloed out of only a mode and pure pulse, free to paint with bold, random strokes. "Time—no changes," the musicians called it. As Hancock put it, "The harmonies are freer, not so easily identifiable. I'm more concerned with sounds, with color and body, than with definite chordal patterns." Herbie pursued keyboard modality on his own dates as well as Miles', penning classic jazz compositions like "Maiden Voyage," "Dolphin Dance" and "Canteloupe Island." Hancock also did five albums with Wes Montgomery and was a CTI mainstay sessioneer—he even did TV commercials.

For three more torrid years, through Miles' hip operations and the collapse of free jazz after Coltrane's death in 1967, the Miles Davis Quintet burned, producing a seminal series of LPs: *Miles Smiles, Sorcerer, Nefertiti* and *Miles In The Sky*. Hancock compositions like "Eighty-One," "The Sorcerer," "Madness" and "Riot" became integral Miles vehicles. It was not until *Filles De Kilimanjaro* that Herbie succeeded in talking Miles into using Fender Rhodes on the record—many purists still feel this is the moment Miles sold his soul to rock 'n' roll. By mid-1968, with the release of his LP *Speak Like A Child*, Hancock was ready to spread his own wings as a leader, although he continued to play on Miles' records through 1972, often as part of two- and three-man keyboard sections with Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul or Keith Jarrett. Hancock's growing fascination with electronics spurred his *Mwandishi* (Swahili for "composer") album and band, with electric bass and guitar now a part of his sound and a wider audience part of his goal.

In late 1972 Hancock moved to Los Angeles, there to soak up the city's heavy R&B undertones and to pursue a different destiny. "I realized I could never be a genius in the class of Miles, Parker or Coltrane," he said in 1973, "so I might just as well forget about becoming a legend and just be satisfied to create some music to make people happy. I no longer wanted to write the Great American Masterpiece." More people were made happy by Hancock's next album than any other LP in jazz history: *Headhunters* featured a radically funky bass-drum axis and a thoroughly modern remake of "Watermelon Man." "Chameleon" became a smash hit, and Hancock became, gasp, a pop star.

Unable to maintain the *Headhunters*' funk freshness beyond one LP, Hancock began experimenting with all manner of pop forms. He tried disco; he tried rock; Lord, he even tried singing! He did TV (*Fat Albert*). He did a film score (*Death Wish*). In a retrospective awareness of how important the Quintet had been, he occasionally called welcome reunions (minus Miles), calling it V.S.O.P. As part of the Columbia Records informal brain trust, he produced phenom Wynton Marsalis' first LP, convincing the label to abandon its plans for a fusion treatment.

By 1983, seemingly on the downside of a fabulously successful career, he heard a Malcolm McLaren scratch track, "Buffalo Gals," and found his curiosity about scratch mirrored in demos Material's Bill Laswell and Michael Beinhorn had come up with for a new Herbie album, *Future Shock*. The resulting "Rockit," with its unanticipated MTV success, sent the album's sales past the million and a half mark, and Hancock had once again confounded the purists with inventive musical hybrids. The follow-up album, *Sound-System*, has yet to duplicate its predecessor's sales abilities, but is still launching break-dance nuggets like "Metal Beat." His performance on last spring's Grammy awards show again opened a lot of industry eyes to Herbie Hancock's potential as a media star. Hancock, a Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist who radiates bigger-than-life enthusiasm just walking into a room, is delighted to take his record company's advice about dressing sharp and projecting an 80s image. He's just completed another film score (for *A Soldier's Story*) and may try another TV project. And why not? Herbie Hancock's experience proves that rules are meant to be broken.

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MUSICIAN: *What do you remember most about the Miles Davis Quintet?*

HANCOCK: My years with Miles were my formative time. That's when I developed a recognizable style. Miles taught me about teamwork, to trust other players, how to be aware of what the other players were creating and use it as food for my own ideas. Miles' genius was finding the notes that would pull it all together. He was the glue. And we were a ball of fire.

It was a hell of a challenge playing with that group. I felt like I was playing catch-up a lot. I felt I was at the bottom of the totem pole. But I guess everybody did at times. I was envious of Tony, but Tony admired my ability to read and write music. At the time Tony didn't read. He does now. We all had a lot of respect for each other. It was great for Ron Carter to play with Tony Williams, because no one else could *respond* to Ron's playing like Tony could. His talent allowed you to play better.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever miss the highs of playing in that group? Do you think you could ever have a musical experience like that again?*

HANCOCK: I didn't mean to give you the impression that that was my *greatest* musical experience. You never again get the same feeling you got from your first love, but your first love's not always the one you marry. I've had experiences with the Sextet, with Buster Williams and Eddie Henderson in the early 70s, which were *more* intense than playing with Miles. One of the differences between the music I'm doing now—the pop things—and most of the old jazz things is the *lightness* of the new stuff. Miles' band was heavy stuff! Now I get a chance to play something that's light and happy and joyful. It's a great pleasure for me.

Playing with Miles was the greatest for what it was—60s jazz. I didn't *understand* that music at the time. It was still developing then. Now it's the fabric of jazz.

MUSICIAN: Headhunters *was enormously important. Coming when it did and with the impact it had, it pushed the whole fusion movement toward funk.*

HANCOCK: It was also the first jazz-based record to go gold and top ten. It went gold before *Bitches Brew*. I think the biggest selling jazz album till then was *Take Five*. If you consider *Headhunters* a jazz album, it was the biggest jazz album ever. Till George Benson did his hit records. They sold a whole lot more than mine. But George's records had vocals. Except for that, *Future Shock* would be the biggest. But you *really* can't call *Future Shock* jazz.

The only thing I was aware of in the early 70s was that it seemed everybody else in jazz borrowed the backbeat and maybe a few other elements, like electric guitar, from pop music, rock 'n' roll, but still maintained a great amount of avant-garde—or post-bebop or whatever the hell you want to call it—elements. That's what Miles did. He still had weird chords and strange melodies. And Chick did it in his own way. But the connection was mostly toward rock. And I was more interested in R&B. When I did *Headhunters* I was trying to make a *funk* album, not a jazz album. Not anything having to *do* with jazz. But as it developed it became what it was. So I let it be what it was. I didn't make a real funk album till *Feets Don't Fail Me Now*. That was the first one that I could say was not a jazz album in any way, shape or form.

MUSICIAN: *Well,* Feets *was disco, which became a real dead end.*

HANCOCK: From a listeners' standpoint, maybe so. But the purpose of disco was not to be listening music. It was supposed to be participatory music, for dancing and good feelings. It was very healthy. Then it got a little boring, 'cause everybody jumped on it and made it all sound the same. When I did my album (*Feets*) a lot of people were saying, "What do you think of this *disco* thing?" and using negative terminology to describe an *idiom in music*. Which didn't make a lot of sense to me. How can an idiom be at fault? If musicians aren't smart enough or hip enough to figure out how to utilize it in more varied ways, it's not the fault of the idiom. Personally, I liked the idiom and I liked a lot of examples of disco music. I was thinking, "What's happening musically? What are people responding to? Why is it so attractive?" I learned a lot from getting into it.

My experience with that was interesting. In order to promote the *Feets Don't Fail Me Now* album I got a chance to go to discos, meet the DJs, and all of that. When I walked in those places they treated me like I was the *savior* or something. Disco people, DJs and people who only went to dance clubs, were so grateful that I would *step down* to do their kind of music! I was there to *learn* and they were saying, "What a nice guy he is to do our kind of music!" It was very bizarre.

I guess they felt that for me to do disco was to give credence to that direction. 'Cause I had a reputation they didn't have. I don't think that I had that much power, but maybe there was some truth to it. Maybe my doing a disco album made *some* people take a second look at it.

"Miles was the glue. And we were a ball of fire."

So up to that point, '78, '79, I was still doing musically interesting records. I think *Sunlight*, one of the vocal records, is one of the best records I've done. But then I did *Monster* which had some good things on it, but I was trying to get into rock and I really didn't know anything about it. I trusted other people's judgment when I shouldn't have. They were living in the past. The rock things didn't turn out very good. But two tunes I did like were "Saturday Night," with Santana, and "Stars In Your Eyes." I liked those two, and I liked the lyrics my sister wrote for "Making Love."

But I didn't like the next album (*Magic Windows*) at all. By the time I did *Lite Me Up!* with Quincy Jones, it was just too late. But then I did *Future Shock*.

MUSICIAN: *You told me a while back that when* Headhunters *was released, in 1974, it was promoted equally to both black and white radio stations. But by the time of* Future Shock *the white promo staff couldn't touch it till the black promo staff had broken it.*

HANCOCK: At a certain point I began to notice that my songs weren't being taken across a broad demographic anymore. In the past, all the business people at the record companies were white. They didn't have any black people. So the black people said, wait a minute. At *least* you can give us a job going to the black areas. In a ghetto they'd much rather see a black person representing Columbia Records than a white person in a suit and tie.

What I think happened was, the record companies started hiring more blacks to handle black music. And the white guys handled pop. It wound up forming two groups who were in competition with each other. The black guys were all gung-ho about their department, and they went out and really *killed*. They really did a great job. The sales of records by black artists increased.

Even when things were at their worst for the record companies, the black department could always be depended on. When the pop department couldn't sell anything, the black music department could somehow sell records all the time. As a result, nobody upstairs wanted to mess with them. They

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The Headhunter's Spears

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HEAVEN 17: DEFINITIVE SYNTHPOP

A British Groove Thang Even Tina Turner Could Love

By Dave Hill

All Americans have heard of McDonalds. Yes, well so have most of us British. Golden Arch imperialism has bitten deep into the consciousness of even this doggedly insular nation. However, just as our ghastly current crop of ascendant politicians urge us to cling to illusions of Britannia's former glories, the U.K.'s very own "Home of the Hamburger" tries to convince us that it still belongs at the top of the tree. High on grime and short on custom it may be, but the Wimpy Bar remains. It is in such an establishment that your correspondent encounters Martyn Ware, one third of Heaven 17, a group of people who, ostensibly at least, stand for a healthier kind of new Brit realism than either Margaret Thatcher or our wholesale capitulation to a clown called Ronald.

Appearances, though, can deceive; whichever end you're looking from. Ware, a matter-of-fact gent with little time for messing about, has rather long, lank hair, wears a promotional T-shirt and a manual workers' donkey jacket of no quality or distinction whatsoever. Several inches of stomach burst from the top of his dog-tooth checkered trousers which, to my mounting astonishment, are actually *flared*. After all, Heaven 17's professional profile has always been so chic, so sleek, so drenched in razor-creased Euro-sophistication.

Ware responds to the decor by ordering fish and chips and insisting he is not an "interesting" personality. "Why aren't I interviewing you?" he suggests. "You're probably just as interesting as I am. We're just a rarity to be honest about it. Could you pass the salt?"

Well, Heaven 17 *are* interesting, although their native land—especially its rock critics—seems to have decided that Ware, Ian Craig Marsh and Glenn Gregory are not nearly as interesting as they were. The reviews of the trio's third and latest LP, *How Men Are*, have been almost uniformly disparaging. "The album has been grossly attacked," says Ware offhandedly; "however, we've done lots of interviews abroad and I've simply concluded that all my worst suspicions about the U.K. rock press have been well-founded. They work on a tiny island and they know they can affect the careers of artists by what they write. It goes to their heads."

Martyn Ware, Glenn Gregory and Ian Craig Marsh shopping for chic penthouses.

BECKMAN/RETNA

The attacks of England's "hacks" and Ware's dismissals of them both carry a degree of justice. The dawning of Heaven 17 in 1981 was greeted with near ecstatic expectations that no one could ever live up to: great, sprawling semiological essays spewed from the over-wrought and under-used minds of our more academic pop thinkers. Launching themselves as an umbrella production operation, the British Electric Foundation, (of which Heaven 17 was but one project), they introduced LinnDrum pop-funk to the top forty and the *Sunday Times*

"We've always been a studio group," states Ware as he sips his tea. "We've never had a drummer. We're a two-piece synth outfit with a singer if we're anything, and although we did a hundred and thirty dates, we've never really performed *live*. We used backing tapes the whole time." Ware takes a certain delight at the despairing efforts of their label, Virgin, to get them on the road. "I know it's still a prevalent attitude that to capitalize on your initial success in America you've got to slog around the country, but we're not that bothered." Scandal!

"We are not in the time of the 60s rock group anymore," Ware insists. "Things have got to change and they are changing. They've changed despite the protests of the traditionalists."

The problem with the traditionalists?

"No *problem*. If you like that sort of stuff, then great. Its strengths were that it offered greater interpretive possibilities. Its weakness was the inability of people to create anything new out of it. Who wants to listen to ten or fifteen minute guitar solos? Unless it's Jimi Hendrix or someone, it's boring. Frankly tedious. Who needs it?"

The choice of the synth was an act of taking advantage of new possibilities: a practical decision, even more than an artistic one. "We couldn't play the traditional instruments, basically," Ware bluntly explains; "we were more interested in composition and arrangement than in taking ten years learning how to play. The very process of learning can often point you in a particular direction and steer you away from original musical thought. Previous to the flood of low-priced synthesizers, your only two chances of getting into a good group were, one, being a great musician or at least a very competent one; or two, you had to be a damn good singer. Now those two preconditions have been stripped away. Personally I think that's healthy. Synthesizers always sounded good no matter how badly you played them. We just wanted a shortcut."

BECKMAN/RETNA

Martyn Ware in a rare live appearance.

Heaven 17's urge to emulate certain aspects of soul hark back to their days in the Human League, then a gaggle of neurotic, semi-intellectual synth enthusiasts who, after Marsh and Ware's defection, moved on to devise ironic, *Vogue*-type video-pop romances. "In the two years previous to the split," Ware notes, "we went through a period where we had a lot of parties. It coalesced in our minds that the sort of music we played at our parties should logically be the sort we were performing as well."

Enter, from Edinburgh, one Bob Last, billed on *Penthouse*'s credits as "Executive Manipulator," and, initially, the founder of radical independent label Fast. In punk's diverse, exciting, immediate aftermath, Fast turned out a string of revolutionary records by such as the Gang Of Four (discordant Marxist funk), the Mekons (discordant Marxist white noise—oddly brilliant) and the Human League. As well as an ear for non-conformist pop talent, Bob Last also had a desire to meaningfully disrupt and/or ridicule standard corporate packaging practices. Glenn Gregory, whose vocal style resembled the League's Phil Oakey, was recruited to sing, their name was lifted from Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, Last tagged along as manager, and the contract with the major, Virgin, gave all concerned the chance to take their ideas overground.

Heaven 17 offered something different on a purely musical level to the rest of England's synth-pop pretenders. Sidestepping the jangling jingles of their peers, they aligned themselves with the burgeoning revival of black American music, creating a groove which was genuinely of the dancefloor, but decidedly Anglo-Saxon, overwhelmingly silicon, that came on like a soundtrack for the promised new leisure era—or at least its more hopeful possibilities. Heaven 17 urged an end to the grisly battles of yore. "We Don't Need This Fascist Groove Thang," they declared impatiently, revelling in their inspiration and taking agit-pop out of bohemia and into the high street and pop glossies. Heaven 17's apparently contradictory profile matched support for the far Left of the British Labour Party with their own cute entrepreneurial instincts which were both stylistic and real; a kind of credit card leisure socialist manifesto. It seemed so much more than poor old rock 'n' roll, so much more than *just* music.

"Well, you can scrub all that stuff for a start," deadpans Ware, who now appears to be paying for "all that stuff," whether his group was trying to sell it or not. "It is true that we are not, and never have been, a group in the traditional sense of the word. We are, as originally envisaged, a production company. We want to produce records which are really good. That's all."

The next major B.E.F. venture was a compilation album called *Music Of Quality And Distinction: Volume I*. A variety of singers were approached to cover songs chosen and arranged by Ware and Craig-Marsh. The Associates' swooping white soulboy Billy MacKenzie delivered distinctive renditions of Bowie's "The Secret Life Of Arabia" and Roy Orbison's "It's Over." Glenn Gregory weighed in with "Wichita Lineman" and Lou Reed's "Perfect Day." Gossip columnist Paula Yates fluttered through "These Boots Are Made For Walking." Gary Glitter leapt out of retirement to revamp Presley's "Suspicious Minds." And of course, there was Tina Turner, who set the Temptations' "Ball Of Confusion" ablaze.

"For us," Ware insists, "it wasn't some post-graduate thesis but just a crash course in production. When you've dealt with someone as professional as Tina Turner and a whole bunch of others in a period of three months, you aren't afraid of anyone!"

The Turner connection has since served both parties well. After Ware and Craig-Marsh instigated the liaison, "it was only her persistence that got us back together. She kept ringing up and saying 'Can't you write us some songs,' and we were so busy with Heaven 17. In the end we said, 'Look, we haven't got time to write anything, but we'll do a couple more covers.' We went through various songs. She seemed more interested in rock material. More Rod Stewart than Marvin Gaye if you see what I mean. I remember sitting with her in a hotel room saying, 'Look, there's no point in phoning us unless you want to do a soul number because that's our fascination. We know it's strange because you've already done it all, but it's also the right time commercially."

Their assessment was correct. The music of black America had traversed the Atlantic in quantity and quality to a wholehearted welcome on London's more fashionable dancefloors. B.E.F. persuaded Ms. T. to record the Al Green classic "Let's Stay Together." The record became a huge U.K. pop hit last fall, and Turner's career underwent a renaissance, helping her to sell out a string of London shows. Reappearing on Turner's latest, highly successful *Private Dancer* album, it is joined by the other product of the second B.E.F. cou-

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British Electro-Funk

Before they got Fairlit, Heaven 17 were heavy Roland addicts, using a Jupiter 4 and 8, the modular System 100M setup, the MC-4 microComposer and a TB-303 Bass Line synth. Since the advent of the Fairlight MCI, they still use the System 100M and the Jupiter 8, but much of the other gear is lying fallow. There is also a Yamaha Grand Piano in B.E.F.'s studios, as well as a Quantec Room Simulator and AMS digital delay and plate reverb units. Despite their other techno-changes, Heaven 17 is still militantly loyal to their LinnDrum.

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GREAT LEAP FORWARD

Recent Breakthroughs in Keyboard Technology

Modern MIDI Modularity

Keyboards and Synths Go Their Separate Ways

By Alan diPerna

With each passing year, the amount of circuitry that can be squeezed onto a microchip increases dramatically. The synthesizer that once fit into a combo organ-sized chassis can now be made the size of a digital reverb unit and mounted on a 19-inch rack. Octave Plateau was the first company to go the rack-mount route with the Voyetra 8, introduced in 1981.

But while the Voyetra keyboard could control one module via an XLR connector, the new MIDI setups allow numerous synthesizer modules to be piloted by a single keyboard.

Add it up for yourself: a single DIN cable can carry sixteen discrete channels of MIDI information, each of which can control its own module. Manufacturers, moreover, are constantly perfecting new ways of further splitting and subdividing the sixteen MIDI channels. MIDI remote controllers add the visual attraction of a simple, elegant single-keyboard setup to MIDI's much-heralded ability to layer and combine the sounds of multiple synthesizers.

This brings us to the crop of keyboard controllers now beginning to appear on the market. As the keyboardist's sole axe, and one he'll be able to hang on to for quite some time (he can upgrade modules without having to get a new keyboard), a MIDI keyboard controller should arguably have the sort of responsiveness and grace that guitarists or violinists typically demand of their instruments. Opinions differ, naturally, on just what that ultimate keyboard playing experience is like. This is reflected in the different controllers now surfacing.

For some, the ideal keyboard is still the good old pianoforte. This feeling has led some players to have their grand pianos and electric grands custom fitted with MIDI output facilities. It has also given rise to controller units like the Roland MKB-100 "Mother Keyboard," which has a full eighty-eight, weighted, wooden keys designed to simulate grand piano action as closely as possible. Velocity sensitivity is an important feature on these keyboards. It can be transmitted as MIDI data from the keyboard to synthesizers equipped to receive it, and can control parameters such as filter frequency cutoff and LFO attack as well as note volume.

But not every keyboard player is looking for piano-like characteristics in a synthesizer controller. Many musicians who grew up on synths or electronic organs find weighted, "pianistic" keyboards a bit too sluggish for playing rapid passages. Also, many players who tote their own equipment can do without the extra weight and bulk of simulated piano controllers. Aimed at these synthesists are units like Oberheim's soon-to-be-marketed XK, a five-octave MIDI controller with a built-in arpeggiator, and Roland's six-octave MKB-300. Both offer lighter, plastic keys without sacrificing velocity sensitivity.

Leader of the pack: Voyetra 8 keyboard

For yet another breed of synthesist, the best keyboard for a performance situation is the one that most resembles a guitar. Around-the-neck keyboard controllers offer the sort of mobility these players desire. Among the options in this category are the Korg RK-100 and Yamaha KX1, both four-octave keyboards, and the three-octave Yamaha KX5.

No matter what basic design philosophy is behind them, most MIDI keyboard controllers are equipped with an assignable split point, allowing the musician to use each of his hands to play a different patch. In addition, there are the usual performance controls in the form of pitch and modulation wheels, benders, levers, joysticks or ribbon controllers. Another key feature is the ability to dial up different patch pre-sets from the remote keyboard. An important point here is that the controller you are using should have as many patch pre-sets as your synthesizer module(s). If your synthesizer has a 100-patch memory, but your controller can only call up thirty-two different patches, you're only going to have remote control of 32% of your synth's total memory capacity.

Roland MKS-30 synth module

Going modular need not involve giving up any of your favorite or in-demand synth sounds either. Many manufacturers are coming out with modular versions of their most popular designs. Roland, for example, has developed the Super Jupiter module and a rackmountable programmer to go with it. A company spokesman described the Super Jupiter as an improved, next generation version of the Roland Jupiter 8. The company has also come up with a six-voice polyphonic module, the MKS-30, and a piano sound module, the MKS-10. Korg has built many features of their Poly 800 into the Korg EX-800 rack-mount module,

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Sampling, Stage Two

More Choices, Fewer Problems, Lots More Action

By Freff

Super sampler: the long-awaited Kurzweil 250

Sound is Data. Data is Sound. Not bad, as mantras go; I suggest you commit it to memory. Because in this new age of RAM, ROM, PROMS and EPROMS, of MIDI and microprocessors, having a good grasp on the basic concept of what makes the 0s and 1s go round is going to help you get a handle on the newest and most powerful musical tools of our time.

Which brings us to Sampling, Stage Two. Quick recap, for those stranded in Antarctica the last five years: in 1979 Kim Ryrie and the folks at Fairlight came out with the Fairlight CMI, the first commercially available instrument that made major use of "sampling." Sampling wasn't, strictly speaking, synthesis (even though everybody called the CMI a digital synthesizer). Instead, it was the process of making a short digital recording, only a few seconds long (*Sound is Data*), and then spitting that recording back out at the press of a key (*Data is Sound*). This was sonic magic. But the CMI was expensive, and in those less enlightened days the computer angle scared a lot of people. Sampling didn't really take off until (1) E-mu Systems broke the price and ease-of-use barriers with the Emulator, and (2) Roger Linn had the bright idea of combining sampled drum sounds with programmability in the LinnDrum. You, me, and the industry haven't been quite the same since.

Right. End of quick recap. On to new territory. There is a standard catchphrase in the computer field that goes "anything you can actually buy is either experimental or obsolete." That's a little extreme, but only a little. Because of the speed of technological change, all the drum machines and the sampling or sample-playing keyboards for sale have been out of date for a while now. Behind the times. Obsolete. New and better ways of doing the trick have been devised, but for various reasons—hardware design, software development, marketing plans, money—they haven't been available to the general public.

Until now. The second wave is rolling in at last, offering the same things that second waves in technology always do: more choice, more quality, more bang for the bucks, and lots more stuff to learn before you buy. Let's look closer.

There are at least eight sampling-based keyboards actually on the market now. That's more than double what there was the last time we covered the subject; a healthy sign. New kids on the block are the Emulator II, the Kurzweil 250 (finally), Ensoniq's Mirage, and two different keyboard/peripheral card combinations for the Apple IIe. Still there, in either revised or imminently-revised forms, are the Fairlight CMI, the Synclavier and 360 Systems' Digital Keyboard (360 also promises a new competitively priced sampling keyboard soon.)

In the second generation, some progress is finally being made on the the Big Problems that always plagued sampling: narrow frequency response in recording and playback, digital noise, lack of memory and insufficient (or nonexistent) editing facilities.

The basic law of sampling is that the

Casebook Crossbreed

A KX5 Gets Xpanded

Yamaha KX5

The combination of the Oberheim Xpander synthesizer and the Yamaha KX5 Remote MIDI keyboard is a particularly potent example of the power of MIDI control and the flexibility of modular electronic musical instruments.

The KX5 keyboard, in addition to playing notes, has many MIDI controllers that can be used simultaneously: key velocity, aftertouch pressure, pitch bend ribbon, modulation wheel, as well as a volume wheel, portamento knob and switch, a sustain button, and even a breath controller input. Using the KX5 with a DX7 is very straightforward: all of the keyboard controls work exactly as labeled. One would expect this kind of flexibility and compatibility between two products of the same manufacturer.

What *is* exciting is how well the KX5 works with products from other manufacturers; in conjunction with the Oberheim Xpander, a synthesizer without any keyboard at all, the Yamaha KX5 becomes even more flexible. The Xpander can receive any of the MIDI controllers that the KX5 puts out (including program changes), but can use them differently than a DX7. For example, the KX5's portamento knob is transmitted via MIDI Controller 5. This controller signal can be used to control almost any function on the Xpander: filter frequency, FM amplitude, and, of course, portamento. The velocity signal can be routed not only to the output volume and filter frequency, but also to the timings of the envelopes. This way, playing the keyboard harder not only makes the sound louder and brighter but snappier, too. At the same time, the pressure, for example, can be used to control filter resonance. In other words, the controllers on the KX5 can be used for any function of the Xpander, not only for what they were originally intended.

Besides velocity and release velocity, the Xpander has five MIDI modulation control sources that can be set to read any MIDI controller. The two velocity controls and these five MIDI modulation sources can be utilized to control almost any function of the synthesizer. — **Daniel Sofer**

Oberheim Xpander

Ensoniq Mirage: sampling for $1700?!

highest frequency you can reproduce is exactly one-half your sampling rate. In other words, to accurately record one second of a 10kHz tone you'd have to make twenty thousand waveform measurements in that second. Not a lot, by bigtime computer standards—but tough to pack into a portable instrument, which made 10kHz pretty much the upper limit of sound quality in the first generation of samplers.

Only thing is, most human beings hear better than that. Even adults, their ears screwed up by rock concerts and subway roars and other modern noise, can usually catch frequencies as high as 15kHz. That's why the new generation of instruments all have significantly improved sampling rates, anywhere from 24 to 30kHz; short of the best human hearing, but near average.

But better bandwidths are useless unless you also do something about digital noise, and that's a mean and tricky bugger. It hits in two ways: first in problems with signal-to-noise ratio that come from how detailed a waveform "picture" the sampling process can make, and second in what happens when you try to record frequencies that are *more* than half the sampling rate. Those still get measured, but inaccurately, and are kicked back to our ears as "aliasing noise"—completely inharmonic pitches that sound really terrible, even to people who think they're tone deaf. To beat this two-headed problem, the new instruments are taking several different approaches. Some use more sophisticated, "intelligent" filtering to keep distortion and aliasing from getting through. Others try to prevent it from happening at all by using microprocessors that can record with 12-bit data words, instead of the old 8-bit type. Because of the way binary data storage works, 12-bit samples can be *sixteen times* more accurate than 8-bit ones. That makes for a hell of an improvement in the signal-to- noise arena.

This is where the greater memory and better editing facilities in the new instruments really stand out. People thought it was great when the old 8kHz bandwidth Emulator could make a two-second sample, perform simple cut-and-paste loops so sustained notes could be played, and have two different sounds available on the keyboard. So what do you think they'll make of the Emulator II, which can make a seventeen-second sample (or seventeen one-second samples, or anything in between), can splice two samples together (so your violin turns into a garbage truck, if you're so inclined) has a keyboard that can be programmably split in up to sixty places (and can cross-fade from split to split, so that sounds even out across pitch), has tons of analog synth-style filtering and envelope control, MIDI, an extensive multitrack sequencer, and built-in SMPTE time code...for essentially the same price (approximately $8,000) as the old version?

Or what about the Kurzweil 250, which has exquisite sound quality—and powerful goodies like a 256-(!)-stage envelope generator, an 88-note weighted keyboard, built-in chorus/digital delay, sequencer, the capacity to build "keyboard setups" of layers and splits up to six levels deep, and lots more, at a cost of $10,700?

And most especially what about the Mirage, from Ensoniq, which is way ahead of the old Emulator, not that far short of the Emulator II, *and costs only $1,700*? (They can pull off this minor miracle thanks to a special VLSI microchip they designed specifically to tackle sampling, something no other instrument in the field has.)

What are people going to say? What do I say? In one word: wow.

Of course, maybe this isn't a problem.

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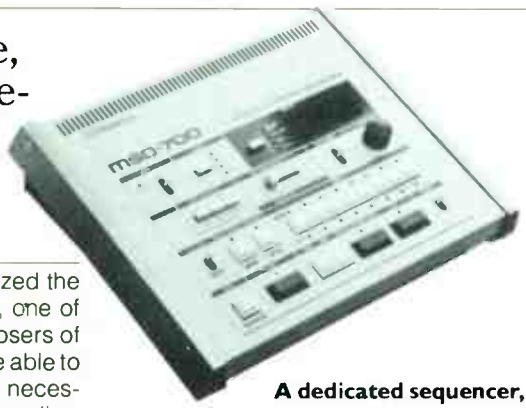
The Music Processor

Sequencers Mature, Bringing Across-the-Board Liberation

By Daniel Sofer



A dedicated sequencer, the Roland MSQ-700

Today's musician has realized the dream of Edgard Varèse, one of the most influential composers of the early twentieth century: to be able to create music alone, without the necessity of an entire orchestra. After all, a painting is the creation of one person, why not a piece of music?

This profound musical evolution could not have taken place without synthesizers, sequencers and drum machines (which are sequencers, too). Today, sequencers have evolved to the point where they are able to store dozens of independent tracks with thousands of notes. The result is that today one does not need other musicians to create music. Now musicians play together not because they *need* to, but because they *want* to.

Sequencers operate by recording your performance into computer memory. A sequencer does not store the *sound* of your performance like a tape recorder, but rather the *actions* that make up your performance: *which* key was depressed, *when* it was depressed, and when it was released. By "performing" these operations in the same order, the sequencer is able to "re-create" your performance.

Many sequencers will also remember *how* the keys were depressed (velocity and pressure), which *sound* program was used, and the use of other devices, such as wheels, levers, pedals, etc. Most sequencers allow overdubbing of different parts as well, achieving much of the performance of a multi-track tape recorder in a box. However, a computer sequencer also enables you to modify your performance in ways that are simply not possible with a tape recorder. Since the sequencer considers pitch, duration, timbre, tempo and key as individual components of a melodic phrase, each of these parameters can

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  For instance, MAX sends and receives on all 16 MIDI channels. MAX also responds to velocity information from other velocity-equipped MIDI keyboards.

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SEQUENTIAL

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be edited independently of the others. For example, pitch and tempo can be altered separately. Also, since it is the synthesizer itself that *sounds* while the sequencer *plays*, the synthesizer's sound can be changed without affecting the performance. So perhaps it's more accurate to describe a sequencer as a word processor for music, a "music processor" if you will.

Sequencers come in three basic forms: the software package and plug-in interface board for personal computers, such as those available from Passport Designs or Rhodes; the dedicated hardware/software box that has essentially the same components as the personal computer, only specially configured for music processing, such as the Oberheim DSX or Roland MSQ-700; and the sequencer that lives within a synthesizer, such as the sequencers in the Synclavier or Emulator II. None of these configurations is inherently better than the others, but there are tradeoffs to consider.

An integrated 16-track sequencer is aboard this Synclavier II.

The personal computer sequencer is usually the least expensive because the major equipment expenditure is made separately. Personal computers also have advantages of larger display capability and floppy disc storage. They are also generally the most difficult to use, and require a lot of typing as well as lots of disc accessing time to get from one place to another.

Dedicated sequencers on the other hand cost more because you are buying an entire computer system. They generally provide data storage only to cassette tape (much slower), and have limited display capability. However, the dedicated sequencer is designed with only one function in mind—sequencing—and they do it faster and easier than the personal computer. Highly recommended for live performance.

The integrated synthesizer/sequencer offers the economy of sharing the computer with the synthesizer itself. Also, like the dedicated sequencer, its hardware is designed to create music, not spreadsheets. However, the integrated sequencer usually is more difficult to interface with other instruments, and the sequencer memory frequently has to share memory space with the synthesizer itself, possibly compromising the performance of both devices.

The most important component of any sequencer however, is the computer software, what the sequencer does and how well it does it. Some time spent operating a sequencer will usually reveal the advantages and liabilities of a particular sequencer.

Sequencers have created an entire new way for composers to approach music. A personal example might offer a glimpse of the "power of the processor": One evening in New York, a friend and I had a particularly inspired jam. We had recorded the proceedings on tape, and spent the next several days programming our sequencer with the best parts. We programmed each phrase into a different sequence, and programmed each part (bass, chords, etc.) into a different track of that sequence. We also programmed our drum machine to provide suitable accompaniment.

After our programming was finished, we had a nice collection of riffs. With the sequencer, we could jump from one phrase to another to see how they sounded one after the other. They sounded good, but they didn't sound like a song, yet. I made a data cassette of the information stored in the sequencer and took it back to Los Angeles with me. After more work at home on my sequencer, I gave an updated copy of the sequencer data to another friend. He loaded it into his sequencer, added more parts, and not long thereafter we had turned our collection of riffs into an entire song. We programmed all of the phrases to play one after another in the proper order, with the appropriate tracks, and now the sequencer could play the entire song by itself.

Interesting enough, but it doesn't end here.... Using the data in our sequencer and drum machine, we recorded a little demo of the song at home. With this

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Musings on Musical Instrument Digital Interface

By John Amaral

By now, you're probably getting the message about **MIDI**: it's the "Great White Hype"...I mean "Hope" of the music industry; better than sliced bread, more powerful than a speeding bullet, faster than a melting iceberg, able to leap mixed metaphors with a single...you get the idea.

Nearly everyone in the U.S. music industry (not so in Europe or Japan, by the way) is totally agog with the implications that a musical instrument can talk to a (loud fanfare) **computer**!

The **real irony** is that MIDI was never intended for a computer to instrument interface. MIDI was originally specified as a protocol for one keyboard synthesizer to talk to (control) another, so that you could play on one and get the sound of two or more. Some bright corporate fellow decided that it **sure would be nice** if a computer were at the other end of the cable. Why you could have the computer play the music and all sorts of other neat stuff!

I'm being a little sarcastic. Actually MIDI is **barely okay** as a technical specification for computer bussing. Almost as soon as it was written down, people complained that it was **too slow**, and didn't provide for many musical considerations like multi-string bending on a guitar, etc. On the other hand, it's what we've got and, creative people that we are, we must be able to find something to do with it! Let me just say parenthetically that many major synthesizer companies, while supporting MIDI on their instruments, also have their own parallel efforts at interfacing; at least one (Casio; they started the revolution, remember?) has not released any MIDI keyboards. By the way, has anyone heard from the International MIDI Association lately?

In this special **Musician** keyboard issue you can find plenty of MIDI synths combined with keyboards, and you've read that the eventual trend, led by **Roland**, is to **component** synthesizers, just like component hi-fi. This is what will lead the new instruments into the homes

of middle-America. It will spark the growth of a **huge base of musical consumers with computers in their televisions** which talk to component synthesizer boxes with all sorts of input devices and musical instrument controllers, and cause a resurgence in the music industry. We are right at 7:00 AM of the dawn of a new musical society!

When I was consulting at Mattel Electronics for the Intellivision Music System (may it rest in peace), the **most important question** they asked was: What do you see on the screen when the music is playing? The **obvious answers** are music notation, musical games, utilities that look like typical devices such as mixdown consoles, etc. But after that, what do you do? This is where the **real creativity** begins. Prediction of the month: Computer-music applications in the home will cause a **human developmental breakthrough** in musical hearing that will be of the magnitude of the development of color vision.

This past fall's **AES** (Audio Engineering Society) **Show** in New York was a lot more interesting and exciting than last year's. The absolute hit was **Fairlight** with a multimedia presentation of their audio and *video* synthesis products, and the remarkable **Synthaxe**, a very well designed controller that's a true hybrid of guitar left hand and right hand techniques, and keyboard attack technique. This is a **revolutionary instrument** whose time has come. I want one.

Other highlights were Roland's MIDI/SMPTE Sync box and their **Music Processing System** software for the IBM and MIDI. The latter combines 8- or 16-track recording/arranging with music printing; it's a lot of fun and well done. Check it out.

Ray Kurzweil is shipping! He had new sounds (real nice), and announced that a number of options are in development such as twenty-second user sampling, looping, line inputs, and **Apple Macintosh software** for off-line storage of sound files, keyboard and instrument setups, sequences, and composition/notation software. The Macintosh is the best computer for music software applications. You won't be sorry if you get one. That's all I can say about that now.

Surprisingly enough, Yamaha was not in evidence with musical instruments. Wait till you see what they've got up their sleeve next spring, though: a Musician's Computer with **built-in DX7 FM synthesis** sounds! All you need to play it and see musical graphics on your TV monitor is a "dumb" instrument controller. I'll talk more about these and other exciting developments in future columns. Ⓜ

Further Developments

For all the hubbub about the digital revolution in keyboard technology, there's a lot of players out there who just *like* analog synths better. Is there anything new out there for under $2000 that has digital-age storage and editing and MIDI capacity without digital age chill? You bet your pitch wheel. For one, there's the **Akai AX80**, an 8-voice programmable with a pair of oscil-

Akai AX80

lators and a sub-oscillator, as well as VCF, LFO, EG and VCA on each voice. It has two memory banks of 32 sounds each, plus another thirty-two presets—that's ninety-six, with a cassette interface for off-loading (there's also a companion sequencer, the MS08).

But the real draw of the AX80 is its luminous fluorescent displays. It gives you *thirty-two* parameters at a glance, vastly simplifying your own sound programming. The 61-note keyboard is velocity sensitive, with a pitch bend and a modulation wheel. The back panel is angled up to eliminate lower back pain while patching. For $1700, this is a remarkably versatile performing synth. (From IMC, P.O. Box 2344, Ft. Worth, TX 76102, 817-336-5114.)

Fender/**Chroma** has just brought out its new $1995 **Polaris** six-voice analog synth with a secret weapon planted aboard—a new 16-bit microprocessing chip called the Intel 80186. The Polaris' blue-chip data-handling capacity includes a 132-patch program bank (plus cassette storage), a MIDI interface and an on-board sequencer (the sequencer boasts a "Tempo Tap" footswitch for setting digital click-tracks and also has a sync pulse output). The keyboard is a five-octave velocity-sensitive one. The Polaris also interfaces with the potent big brother Chroma synth. Speaking of Fender, they've just brought out a much-improved Rhodes electric piano, the Mark V. It has better tone control, new keyboard action for more sensitive dynamics and—best of all—35% less weight.(Rhodes Chroma, Fender Musical Instruments, 1300 East Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92634, 714-879-8080)

If you're ready to get heavy into MIDI but can't bear (or afford) to part with your older keyboard, then **J.L. Cooper** is a name you should get to know. They make an impressive list of hardware interfaces which convert the control voltages and clock outputs in "obsolete" keyboards and drum machines to MIDI data. Some are installed in the synth, like the kit for the Oberheim OB-Xa, while others are separate rack-mounts like their MidInterface Iin, MicroSync or MIDI Brain Driver. Since space here is short, contact them about your specific aggravation. You may also want to contact them about their new disc drive Songstore II, which interfaces with high-tech sequencers and drum boxes like the Roland MSQ-700 and the Sequential Circuits Drumtraks. Load time is a scant five seconds, and you can use ordinary 3½-inch floppy discs. Throw away your cassette off-loader for $995. Cooper also makes a MIDI Lighting Controller for adding lighting to onstage sequencing. (J.L.Cooper, 2800 South Washington Blvd., Marina Del Rey, CA 90291, 213-827-4884)

Now singers get their crack at synthesizer control with **Fairlight**'s new **VT-5 Voicetracker**. It takes any monophonic input (including a singer's microphone) and outputs both CV/Gate and MIDI synthesizer control signals. Each of these signals includes control outputs for Pitch, Attack, Level Envelope Follower, Harmonic Content and Purity (breathiness). There is also a video/RF output for displaying the wave form and pitch value of any input, and an optional RS 232 computer communications port. Along with all this, the Voicetracker has its own programmable synthesizer functions (VCO, VCA and VCF) for use with external instruments. According to Fairlight, it will retail for about $2,500.(Fairlight, 2945 Westwood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90064, 213-470-6280)

Rhodes Chroma Polaris

CHUCK LEAVELL'S MIXMASTER

Team Player, from Sea Level to Higher Elevations

By Anthony DeCurtis

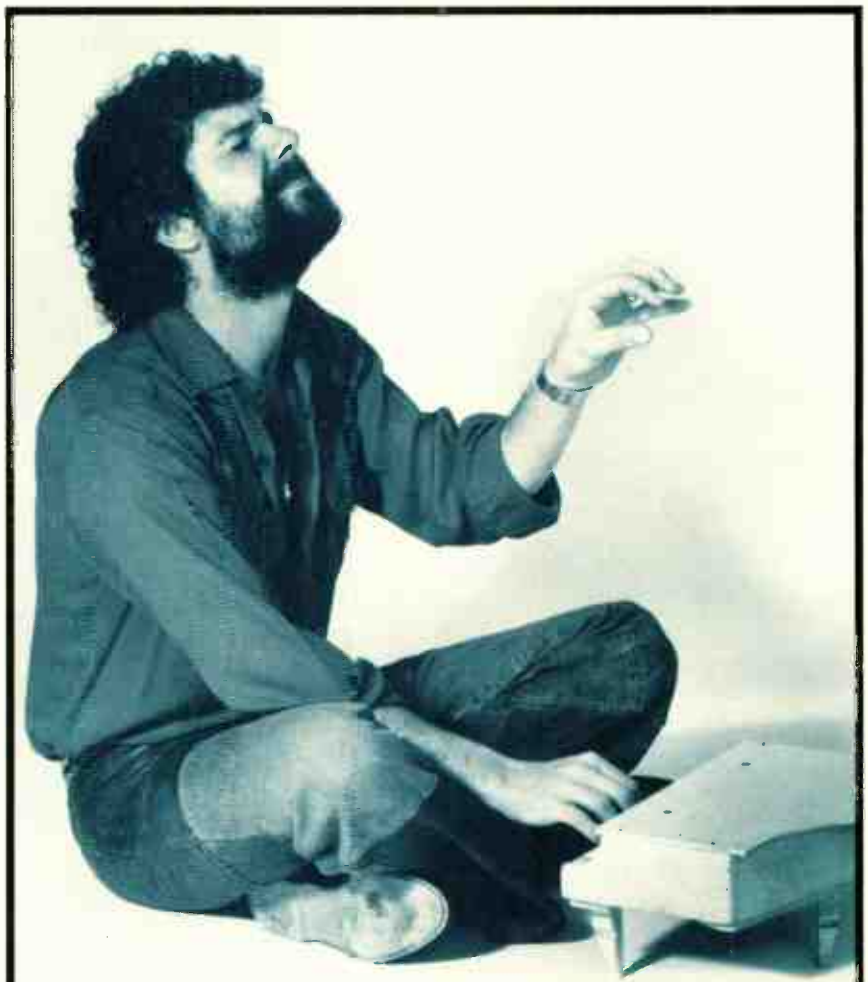
Relaxing in the comfortable back room of his wife's fashionable downtown Macon dress store, keyboardist Chuck Leavell is doing something he both enjoys and does often: complimenting other musicians. The beneficiaries of Leavell's graciousness in this instance are "all the guys Bob Seger's ever had play with him on piano.

"They're very tasteful, expressive," the ex-Allman Brother and former leader of Sea Level explains, obviously warming to his topic, "without being too forceful. Well, maybe 'too forceful' isn't a good description—I don't like timid piano players. Somebody who really *attacks* the piano, man, I love that. Maybe what I'm trying to say is that what I like about the guys who've played with Seger is they don't try to play too much. They know when *not* to play as well as when to play. That, to me, is the most important thing. Space can be the best note sometimes."

A thirty-two-year-old native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Leavell has covered a great deal of ground in his musical career, with flexibility and taste being the consistent hallmarks of his work. His generosity to other players is not limited to conversation; it's a natural outgrowth of what he believes to be his greatest virtue as a musician.

"The key word is to act as a catalyst," Leavell explains. "That's my most important role as a musician. I can hold my own as a soloist—I have some interesting melodic lines to say when I feel like I wanna say 'em. But even more than that, I enjoy the role of bringing it all together. I like to make something happen between the drummer and the guitar player. My life is centered around the theory that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and that's my theory about music. If I can do something to contribute to the whole, to make it better, rather than stand out and be a hotshit piano player, I'm much happier."

Music began its catalytic action on Leavell when he was quite young, but probably not in the way you think. His Alabama background and close identification with the Southern rock flowering of the early 70s would suggest a childhood spent absorbing the blues with as little effort as it took to breathe honeysuckle.



Chuck's theory that "the whole is greater than the parts" applies to Allmans and Stones.

In fact, Leavell's interest in the piano began in his efforts to imitate his mother, an amateur who played standards for her youngest child "out of a store-bought sheet music book." Though Elvis was "a little harsh," the Beatles kicked in hard, and the British invasion—and a knock-out Ray Charles concert to which an older sister brought him—made Chuck aware of the blues tradition rooted in his "own backyard."

Apprenticeships with Alex Taylor and Dr. John ("Man, that was like going to college") led to an invitation to join the Allman Brothers in 1972, a year after Duane had died. Leavell was all of twenty. He appeared in Macon one day to work on Gregg Allman's solo album, *Laid Back*, when events took a strange and promising turn. "We went in for the first session and *all* the Allman Brothers show up," Leavell recalls with undisguised delight. "I'm a little curious 'cause I thought it'd be separate musicians. But I'm *happy*, you know? And it's not like they're saying, 'Here's a song, we're gonna put this on tape.' It's more like, 'Hey, man, pick a key and let's play.'

"Then we started laying down a couple of songs, after three or four nights of feeling each other out and jamming. Gregg *was*, by the way, in the midst of all this, doing a solo album. What wound up happening is that we worked simultaneously on *Brothers And Sisters* and *Laid Back*. I was in hog heaven, man, 'cause we'd do *Laid Back* sessions in the daytime and *Brothers And Sisters* at night. I couldn't believe it! About halfway through the recording Gregg approached me and said, 'Would you like to join the band?' I said,

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'What band? (laughing) Let me make sure we *understand* each other!'"

Leavell stayed a Brother until 1976, when the band first broke up. At that point, Leavell, guitarist Jimmy Nalls, and two fellow Allmans, bassist Lamar Williams and drummer Jai Johanny Johanson, decided to pursue some musical ideas that had intrigued them for a good while. Thus was born the distinctive fusion-with-a-drawl combo, Sea Level, which derived its name from a pun on its keyboardist's moniker, C. Leavell.

"As the Allman Brothers Band worked from '72 to '76, there came a real close tie between Jai, Lamar and myself," states Leavell. "We'd be on the road, playing gigantic shows, and we'd rent an extra ballroom and the three of us would just go play all day. We'd set up out in the middle of a field somewhere, anything for fun, just to play. We were playing jazz-flavored stuff, R&B, sort of Crusader-esque things. When the brothers disbanded, Jai, Lamar and I said, 'Let's expand on what we've been doin' the past three or four years.'"

Depending on your point of view, Sea Level was either completely uncompromising—the band seemed almost perverse in its unwillingness to conform to the expectations of any one segment of its audience—or compromised in every way: a rock band with a jazz jones, an instrumental band that insisted on doing vocals, an experimental band that always seemed secretly to be hoping for a massive hit. Technically, however, the band in all its various formations was a standard setter.

At its best, Sea Level challenged virtually every listener's received tastes, and the band's open-mindedness seems adventurous now as boundaries in contemporary popular music congeal. The group's failure to attain commercial success still gnaws at Leavell. "We weren't always successful in what we tried," Leavell admits. "Lookin' back on the albums, there were some tunes we should never have done, that we could've probably made the whole thing focus in a lot better had we chosen some different material. Maybe tried not to be quite so diverse. We were trying to satisfy everybody's musical taste.

"There was such a big label stuck on any poor band out of the South, and there still is. When Sea Level came around and people termed it 'Southern rock,' they expected that kind of a band, when you had a group that was doing a little bit more experimentation. Nobody knew how to deal with it, how to market it...some people didn't know how to listen to it."

The Rolling Stones, apparently, were among the people who did know how to listen because when they planned their 1981 U.S. tour, they auditioned Leavell to join Ian Stewart on keyboards. Leavell lost that gig to Ron Wood's buddy from the Faces, Ian MacLagan. But when the Stones invaded Europe in 1982, Leavell joined them on the front lines, doing small halls and a club date ("Who else does that? The Stones are so great for that!") as well as the mega-stadiums and participating in the ses-

continued on page 89

LEAVELL BEST

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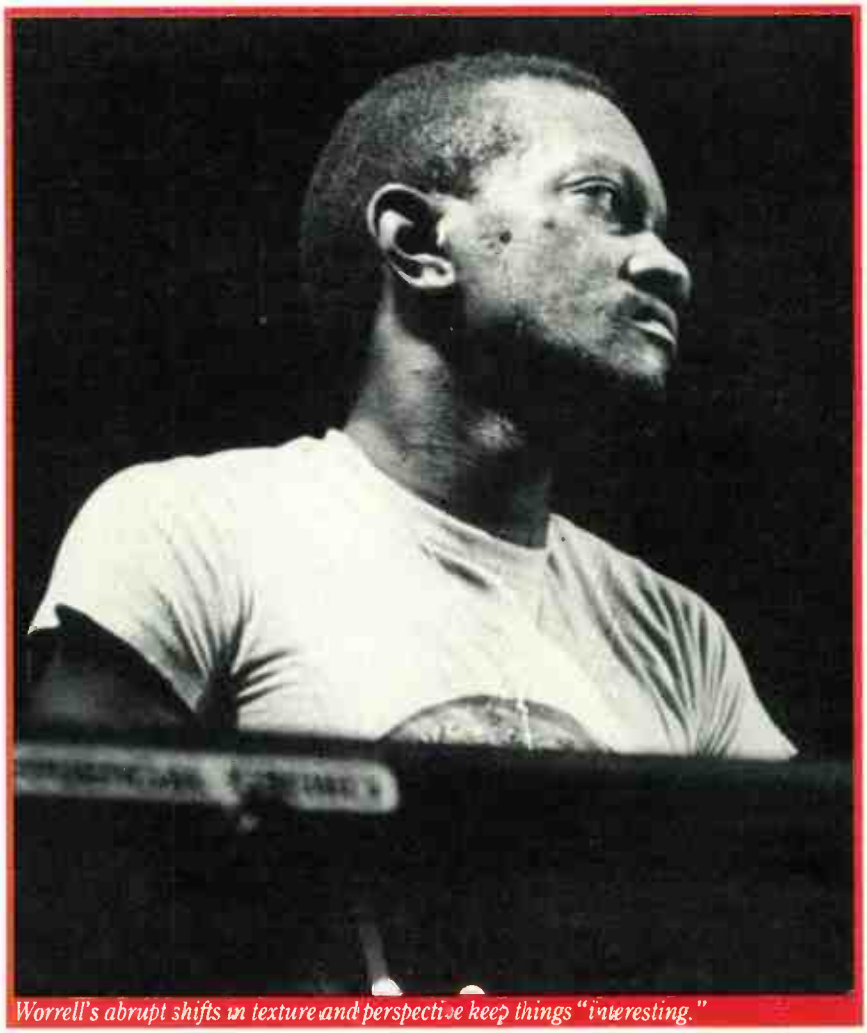
BERNIE WORRELL'S CLASSIC FUNQUE

Mozart Meets P-Funk Down On the Corner

By Scott Isler



Worrell's abrupt shifts in texture and perspective keep things "interesting."

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Except for perhaps one gray hair in his moustache, Bernie Worrell does not look like someone who's been playing keyboards in public for thirty-six years. Then again, Worrell got a considerable head start by making his concert debut at the age of four; he performed Mozart and Boccherini.

Today, of course, Worrell's renown has less to do with eighteenth century baroque than twentieth-century funque. He came to attention in the pop world for his significant contributions to George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic machine in the 1970s. Since 1980 he has also toured and recorded with Talking Heads. But Worrell's classical training and child-prodigy background separate him from the run of piano plunkers and syntheticians.

The wiry, soft-spoken Worrell isn't the type to go on at length about his musical prowess. Others, however, are willing to speak for him. "No one even comes close to Bernie," states producer Bill Laswell, with whom the keyboard player has worked on a few projects this year. "He's a genius." Head Head David Byrne agrees: "His attitude, his take on things complements ours really well," Byrne says. "It's different than the usual way a musician thinks—hearing things in interesting ways."

Worrell started with piano at the tender age of three and a half. His mother, who played and sang at church and social occasions, gave young Bernie his first lessons. Her son soon outpaced her, and began getting formal instruction. By age ten—after the family moved from Long Branch to Plainfield, New Jersey—Worrell was playing concertos in front of a symphony orchestra and studying with a pupil of composer Edward MacDowell.

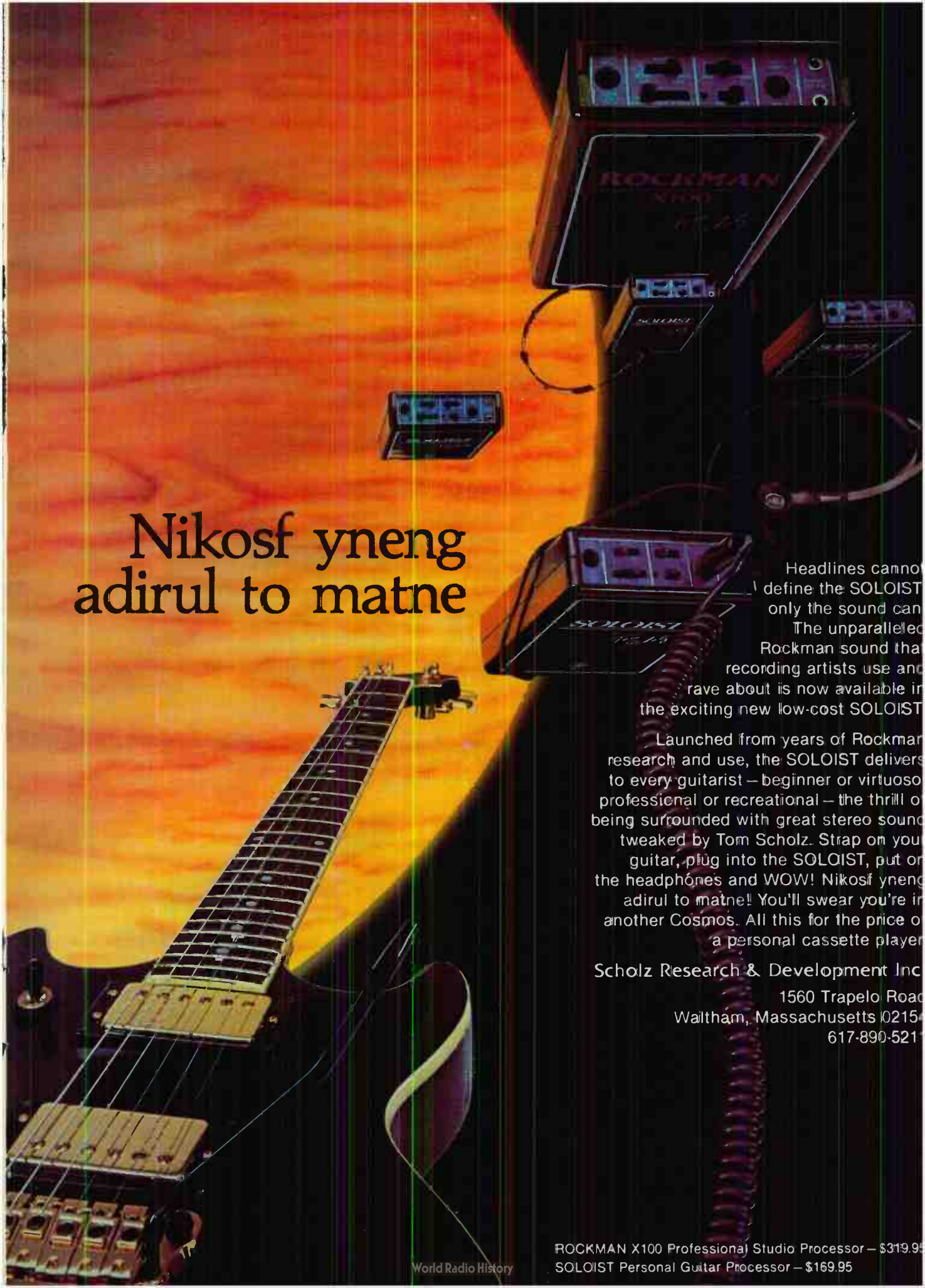
Around the time he hit puberty, Worrell met George Clinton. The latter was working in a Plainfield barber shop where Worrell would sneak off to get his hair processed. Outside of the barber shop, Clinton was singing in the respectably suited Parliaments vocal group, and hustling songs in nearby New York. When he realized this musically precocious eleven-year-old was eager to go pop, Clinton put the perfect-pitched Worrell to work writing lead sheets and figuring out chord changes and melody lines.

Worrell was now hooked on composers more current than Boccherini, but his musical education continued. At age fourteen he received private lessons at Juilliard. After high school he attended the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Unfortunately Worrell had to leave one year short of graduation, when his father died and tuition money ran out. The conservatory's loss was the nightclubs' gain.

Even while he was attending college, Worrell earned money playing behind touring acts who came to Boston. "I was able to pick up anything I could hear," he says. In this way he got to sit in with (among others) Dionne Warwick, Tammi Terrell, Wilson Pickett and local faves Chubby & the Turnpikes, before they went on to greater fame as Tavares. After leaving school, Worrell joined soul singer Maxine Brown on a national tour. He was with Brown in Bermuda when his old mentor Clinton contacted him to join the Parliaments, who had finally scored a hit in "(I Just Wanna) Testify."

By the late 60s Clinton was trailblazing musical directions with his Funkadelic ensemble. Worrell settled down to become a cornerstone of the P-Funk edifice. His keyboards could be surprisingly ethereal or funky-butt as needed; his bass line on Parliament's 1978 hit "Flash Light" is considered an influential funk crossover landmark. Besides playing, Worrell contributed to the songwriting, and arranged strings and horns. He describes adding chords and structures to Clinton's vocal lines, and going behind the board when the singer went to the vocal booth.

"I was the bandleader until a few



years ago. I should have had co-production credit on a lot of things. But maybe due to my naïveté it wasn't taken care of." Worrell left Clinton in 1980 and subsequently brought two lawsuits (still pending) against him. The legal tussles, though, didn't stop Worrell from rejoining Clinton's live band in the wake of "Atomic Dog"'s success last year.

Worrell hardly had time to sit down after walking away from P-Funk when Jerry Harrison of Talking Heads contacted him about joining *his* group. David Byrne had seen P-Funk and thought Worrell would be "perfect" for the evolving, Afro/new wave Heads. He's had no problem coordinating with Harrison's keyboards: "We just fill in the spaces." (Worrell also played and wrote on Harrison's 1981 solo album.) He does see himself affecting the Heads, especially on a cut like "Burning Down The House." "You can tell the funk influence, the pulse, my clavinet style, some of the lines—I'd know where it was from." And anyone who's seen *Stop Making Sense*, the Heads' concert film, knows how thoroughly integrated Worrell is into the band. "They're not going back to four people," he chuckles.

Worrell's own influences—Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck and Motown bassist James Jamerson—say a lot about his style. It's enough to make you wonder if he isn't a frustrated guitarist, especially given his penchant for broad, sustained tones and glissandi. (Mention former Talking Headmate Adrian Belew to him and he breaks into a big grin.) Worrell admits to adapting other instrumental techniques to keyboard—"not the actual sound" but the phrasing.

Pressed for names of keyboard players he listens to, Worrell mentions Herbie Hancock, Jan Hammer and Keith Emerson. Keith Emerson? "I'm labeled as a funk musician," Worrell protests, "but that's because of the success with Parliament-Funkadelic. I play everything." (As for Hancock, a musical chicken-and-egg question is which came first: Herbie-funk or Bernie-funk?)

Indeed, Worrell is usually typecast as funk keyboardist extraordinaire—not the worst reputation to have. But, as his extensive training makes clear, he's capable of much more. His crowded resume includes work with B-52 Fred Schneider, Scot-rocker Jessie Rae, reggae artists Black Uhuru, Rita Coolidge and Human Switchboard, as well as Gil Scott-Heron, Mtume and Afrika Bambaataa.

Nor is Worrell slow at thinking on his feet. "In live performances he can really change the texture of a song," Byrne says, "or add another level. We're playing, say, really straight and he'll play along. But then he'll throw in all these little things—chord inversions or whatever—that kind of throws the whole thing into a different perspective for a couple of seconds. Then he whips right back into a straight reading, or does a completely unexpected thing at the end of a song. He'll do something one night and not do it again the next."

Worrell's perspective—from the con-

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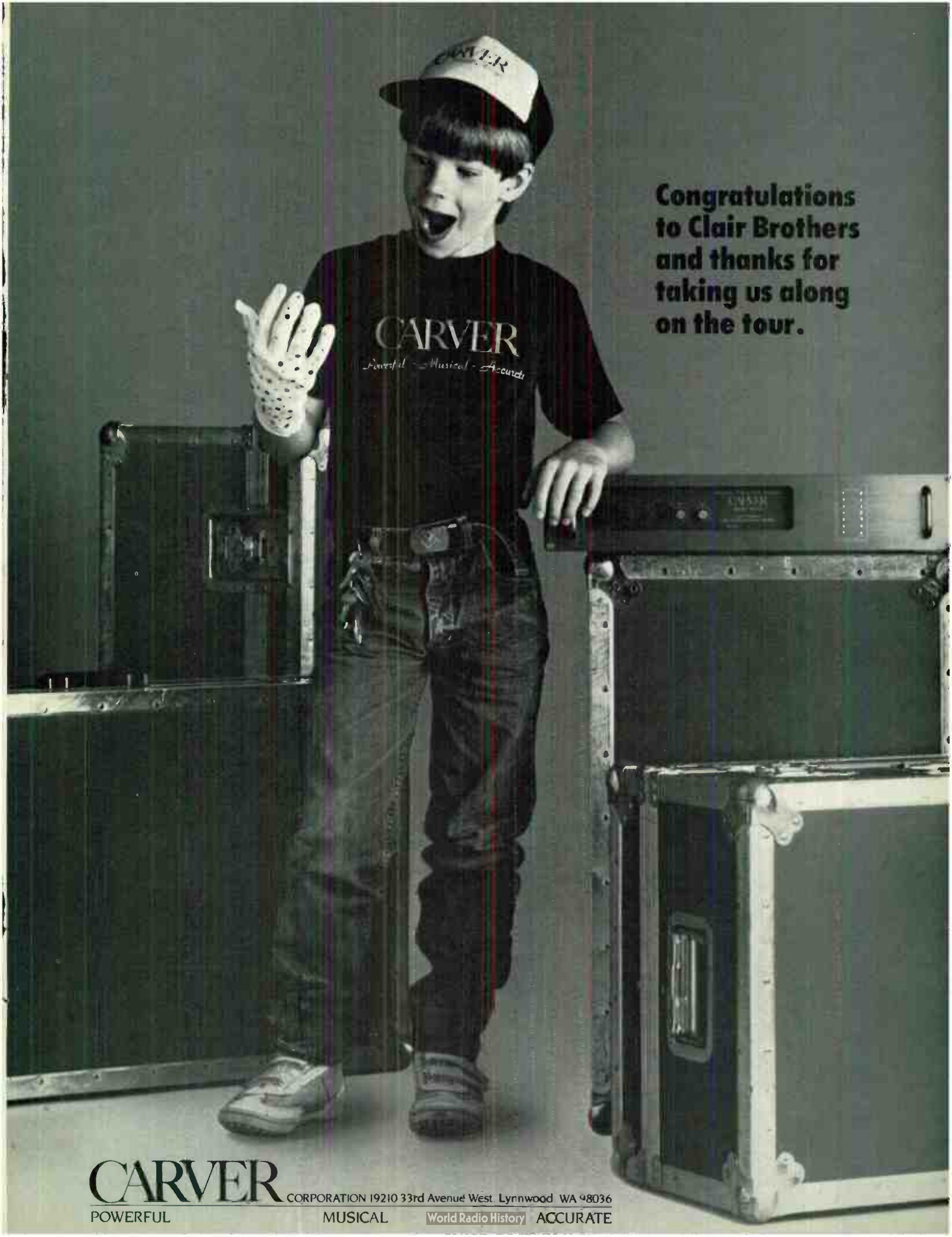
BERNIE DOWN THE HOUSE

"My equipment is my mind, my fingers and my ears," Bernie Worrell says. At least nobody can take *that* away from him, unlike the theft two years ago of his more material tools. Now he has a clavinet and Sequential Circuits Pro 1, a monophonic synthesizer to substitute for the late, lamented MiniMoog. (He likes to mix two Pro 1s for a fatter sound.) Raised on the MiniMoog and ARP, Worrell has used the first series E-mu Emulator, the Prophet 5 and 10, Oberheim OB-8, Yamaha CP-70 and CS-80, Roland Jupiter 8 and Juno 60. Yamaha and Roland are his preferences. Onstage his electric piano is a Yamaha. With P-Funk he used Marshall amplifiers and 400-watt-per-channel Sansui power heads. Now he has Roland Jazz Choruses, one with stock amps, one with JBLs. Among his boxes are a t.c. electronic phase shifter and auto-filter. More Worrell will not reveal: "I've been copied enough!"



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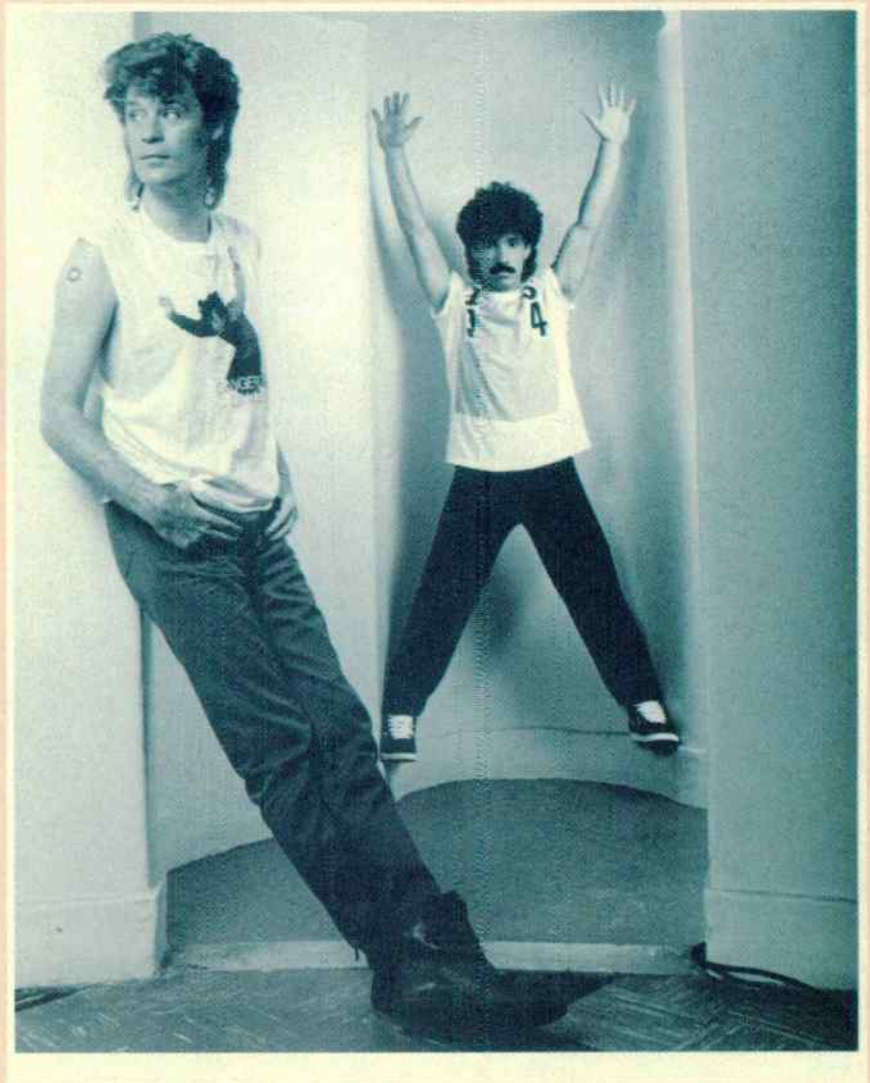
RECORD REVIEWS

Maestros of Yuppie Soul, Hall & Oates keep their sleek street machine in high gear.



LAURA LEVINE

HALL & OATES

Big Bam Boom
(RCA)

Daryl Hall & John Oates are the Calvin Kleins of Pop. Maestros of Yuppie Soul, they represent quality merchandise for the mass market buyer, high style without elitist one-upmanship or price. These prime purveyors of blue-eyed Philly rhythm & blues have been on a wicked roll since they took control of their up 'n' down career by assuming the production reins on the multiple-hit LP *Voices*, four years ago. Aside from staking out a musical turf that crossed over more boundaries than a gerrymanderer, H&O assembled a steady, veteran working band which has become tighter over time, now equally capable of AORockin' out via G.E. Smith's steely leads, or, thanks to Charlie De Chant's bleating sax, plaintive R&B crooning.

Big Bam Boom reeks with the confidence of a gambler throwing sevens. The wrinkle is provided by mixmeister Arthur Baker, who stretches, twists and pulls the duo's crisp hooks into the hip-hop present without losing sight of Daryl and John's street-corner pasts. And while Baker's array of scratch synthetics can interfere or harden into cliché, the approach is smoothly integrated into the Spectorian glockenspiels of the first single/video hit, "Out Of Touch," a ditty which has been fixed inside my brain like a moth near a flame for the past month.

The Baker break is also apparent on the thwacking tribal fanfare instrumental, "Dance On Your Knees," as well as the staccato spellalong, "Method Of Modern Love," where the patented H/O harmonies are coolly molded to a razor-sharp metallic rhythm pulse. "Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid" has a soaring, Argent-styled massed chorus designed for screaming over your crackly AM car radio.

What Hall & Oates are trying to say between the cogs of their sleek, hit-making machine, though, is a bit more difficult to discern. On sardonic, anti-fashion jibes such as "All American Girl" and "Possession Obsession," Hall & Oates toy with the misogyny of "Maneater," but also seem to be turning that cynicism around by holding a mirror up to their narcissistic, me-generation disco-id audience.

The nagging thought remains that there's a void at the heart of H&O's music that ultimately makes their soul sound ersatz, a rap which still plagues these two honest craftsmen even at the height of their success. Perhaps it's because they've proven adept at integrating different styles—from folk-rock to heavy metal, from pop to soul—that Hall and Oates seem to lack conviction. Or could it be that the twosome's pinup looks overshadow their own skills, mak-

ing their sound seem more styled than substantive? But by contrasting the impermanence of fashion with the durability of style, Hall and Oates do confront, however elliptically, the values behind their own transient pop. Daryl Hall and John Oates have always sought recognition that they are more than just the sum of their hits. *Big Bam Boom* may not win over all their critics, but, with its savvy appropriation of street credibility, it will certainly do nothing to brake their popular momentum. – **Roy Trakin**

JAMAALADEEN TACUMA

Renaissance Man
(Gramavision)

It's hard to imagine a more natural coexistence of dance-impulsed funk and cerebral gravity than this record. Tacuma works very convincingly within the boundaries of Ornette Coleman's harmolodic concepts of polytonality, polyrhythm and collective improvisation, yet coats the music so sweetly that the lumpen masses might not realize they just swallowed such potent medicine. After all, Philly funk was the sound Tacuma grew up with, before Ornette showed him the beauty of abstract expressionism. But besides showing that the bass can function as a melodic force to rival traditional lead instruments, Tacuma has also grown into a formidable composer, and, in the best tradition of harmolodics, a very democratic bandleader. Cornell Rochester really sizzles, James Watkins' rhythmic alto fits beautifully into the ensemble's dynamics, while Olu Dara's sultry cornet and African flute adorn the title track. Tacuma's almost hilariously funky rearrangement of Ornette's "Dancing In Your Head" is perversely engaging and features bleats of wisdom from the master himself. Bringing David Murray and Vernon Reid together for perhaps Tacuma's most interesting composition, "Sparkle," was a great idea (let's hear more), though rock drummer Bill Bruford's concept of swing is embarrassingly stiff.

Now, the bad news. The very energetic and ambitious Tacuma sometimes bites off more than he can chew—and the audience can digest. His music's freneticism can make you feel as if he's trying to cram too many ideas into too small a space—sort of the opposite of Walter Mondale. "The Battle Of Images" is a forced and selfconscious thread of almost unrelated motifs for strings that attempts the brooding brilliance of Ornette's orchestral writing but never achieves it. And poet Howie Montaug's simple-minded tribute to the illustrious Paul Robeson doesn't belong on any album ("The house committee couldn't relate, called him a communist and locked the gate"—get the idea?). But these lapses are easily redeemed by Jamaaladeen's tenacious poly-everything urban soundscapes. *Renaissance Man* is the thinking person's funk. – **Cliff Tinder**

STEVIE WONDER

Selections From The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack
The Woman In Red
(Motown)

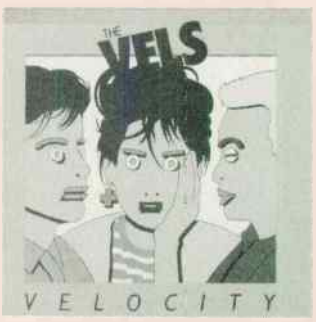
The new Stevie Wonder album has this problem: It thinks it's a soundtrack. It doesn't get violent about it, true. In fact, except for the title song, you really wouldn't know that it's supposed to be movie music. Sounds a lot like a Stevie Wonder album, actually; but, of course, Stevie Wonder albums don't need throw-away songs, which is why it's unfortunate this particular record thinks it's a soundtrack.

And for a soundtrack, it certainly squanders its energies in peculiar areas. "Don't Drive Drunk," for instance, has a moderately interesting hook and a perfectly respectable message that is not in any way compelling—it just sits at the end of the album like a six-and-a-half-minute happy face, warning against the risk of getting smashed while driving smashed. It could be worse, though. It could be the equally moralistic but sickeningly saccharine "I Just Called To Say I Love You," an irritatingly catchy number that spends the better part of six minutes hammering the title hook into your cerebral cortex.

Wonder hasn't been taken over by pod people intent on turning pop into a vast wasteland of Paul McCartneys, though. It's just that damned movie angle. "The Woman In Red," though a throw-away, is a terrific exercise in lustful longing; sexual desire has always been a Stevie strong point (remember "Boogie On Reggae Woman"?). "Love Light In Flight" is an uptempo ballad in the manner of Jeffrey Osborne; though better than most of what Osborne has cut so far, it's still more of a genre exercise than a song. And "It's More Than You" merely proves that Stevie Wonder doesn't need the freedom of jazz to stretch out melodically (those who remember "Fingertips" already knew that).

But the rest of the album is consistently adult in a way that McCartney has never been able to manage. "It's You" and "Weakness," both duets with Dionne Warwick, are love songs of compositional and emotional depth that few writers today can match, while remaining effortlessly direct. Wonder understands both the eloquence of pure melody and the need for structure, and compromises with irresistible craftsmanship, artistry that resonates with genuine feeling. This is even more apparent on "Moments Aren't Moments," a heart-breaking love song that features Warwick without Wonder's voice, and ought to be instant refutation to anyone foolish enough to argue, "They don't write 'em like that anymore." Intoxicatingly melodic, utterly endearing, it's a perfect example of the sort of balladry that makes Stevie Wonder the phenomenon he remains.

Too bad it's stuck on this soundtrack album. – **J.D. Considine**



THE VELS

Velocity
(Mercury/PolyGram)

The gurgling girlishness of Alice DeSoto's engaging vocals are a slightly cracked cross between Little Peggy March and Doris Day during her "I Said My Pajamas (And Put On My Prayers)" period. DeSoto, who was born in Cincinnati (as was Day), but grew up in

Philadelphia (like Little Peggy), is less precious and more percipient than her two counterparts, however; and on *Velocity*, which was produced by Steve (Tom Tom Club, B-52's, Black Uhuru) Stanley, her visual and aural prettiness takes on a parlous quality. Winsome dance numbers like "Day After Day" and "Private World" start out seemingly frothy but grow curiously sinister. The Vels are after something in a mordant Roxy Music vein but with a softer focus and a more distinct sense of humor. Using the hollow spaces, streamlined poses and penny arcade polyphony prevalent in much of the current turntable fare, they've fashioned gentle, and inviting, critiques.

While unenamored of the willful vulgarity and inflated symbolism now being hawked in body rock, the Vels do not fault the music's widespread veneration of the 1950–60s pop naïveté; if anything, they strip the latter down to codify its appeal. *Velocity* is an intriguing, spirited, often insidiously-satisfying distillation of synth-pop's freakish past and polished future—a vision of an urbane new Brill Building as redesigned by Robert Venturi. – **Timothy White**

CULTURE CLUB

Waking Up With The House On Fire
(Epic)

Nobody has ever accused Culture Club of having too much depth. For them, frivolity is its own reward, and there's more than enough meaning in a lush melody and an outrageous outfit. Thus, it comes as delicious irony that "The War Song" manages in its own simplistic way to be the most eloquent protest song of the season.

The trick is in Boy George's approach. Rather than attack war as a problem in need of solution, he treats it as an attitude. It's not quite "All You Need Is Love," though the singer hints that a little compassion couldn't hurt; instead, he takes the chorus "War, war is stupid" and attaches it to a melody so giddily insinuating that the listener has no choice but surrender. As political science, "The War Song" isn't going to tear George Will away from his Springsteen albums, but on a level of pure tactics, it's surprisingly shrewd.

Growth is evident throughout *Waking Up With The House On Fire*, particularly on a musical level. The songs are more complex than before, yet no less catchy; instead of sounding cluttered by the additional material, they are wonderfully fleshed out. This is particularly obvious with "The War Song," where the B-strain seems to intensify the allure of the chorus, but is equally true of "The Medal Song" and perhaps the most complex composition here, "Dangerous Man." It isn't merely a matter of melodies, either, because the band sets up its hooks with a rhythmic assurance that, particularly with "Unfortunate Thing" and "The Dive," threatens to eclipse their melodic interest. Pure pop doesn't come any fizzier than this.

Which ought to make the cynics among us all the more suspicious. Granted, the essential ingredient in any effervescence is air, and it will be hard for even the most fervent Culture Club fan to argue that there's any great (or even small) significance to many of these songs. But so what? Where *Waking Up With The House On Fire* succeeds most brilliantly is in making content almost irrelevant. After all, what could Boy George possibly *say* that would be as interesting as something he'd sing? – **J. D. Considine**

XTC

The Big Express
(Geffen)

Compulsively bursting with invention, originality and wit, *The Big Express* clacks away from the floral and pastoral scenery of *English Settlement* and *Mummer*, and delights with its range of moods, textures and topics. Indeed, this musical excursion is rather more suggestive of XTC's *Black Sea* period, in which each song seemed to plumb a different exotic world. By combining provocative lyrical metaphors with rich soundscapes, leader Andy Partridge is becoming adept at creating three-dimensional travelogs. XTC is not happy unless you smell-touch-taste the music.

Take for example the witty "Bless You All You Pretty Girls," a sailors' homage to all those young maidens with "your pale arms waving." From there we travel to the country-flavored "Shake You Donkey Up," a kinetic square dance complete with mule-like sound effects. The eccentric love song, "Seagulls Screaming Kiss Her, Kiss Her," rolls in like the fog with a haunting repetition of Mellotron, thundering drums and unresolved tensions. So kiss her already!

But XTC can also pack a direct emotional punch. "Reign Of Blows," with its heavy backbeat and screaming harmonica, and the jarring discordant breakdown of "Train Running Low On Soul Coal," show off XTC at their most effective. Moulding makes two other lovely contributions: the abrasive, angelic "Wake Up" and the wistful "I Remember The Sun."

The Big Express' theme is implied by its symbol of an antiquated British railway. Here, Partridge expresses his distaste and caution for the arrogance of progress. A Beatlesque "The Everyday Story Of A Smalltown" pays tribute to the simplicity and "backwardness" of a burg. ("You're just too fast for little old me...next you'll be telling me it's 1990," Partridge scoffs.) At the other extreme, "This World Over" features Police-like rhythms and a flowing wash of sadness as Partridge movingly addresses the survivors of a nuclear war.

XTC is never short of ideas; their only real flaw is a propensity for crowding together too many. But in this day of pop cliché, I'd take XTC's senses-working-overtime anytime. I just hope they're still not too far ahead of their time. – **Erica Wexler**

FELÁ ANIKŨLAPO-KUTI

Live In Amsterdam
(Capitol)

Perambulator
(Lagos International)

Nigeria's Felá Anikũlapo-Kuti was the presumed messiah to break African pop internationally, just as Bob Marley

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had broken reggae. He sings in comprehensible pidgin English. His lyrics are funny/serious political broadsides. There are dozens of prominent juju, highlife and soukhous practitioners, but Felá is certainly the most credible purveyor of the incendiary jazz-cum-funk-cum-African roots Afrobeat synthesis; after all, he invented it. Not so accidentally, Felá was taken out of action for several years by government attacks, thus leaving the apolitical Sunny Adé to make African music's first splash in America. So Felá fans took heart from the past year's events: Felá and his Egypt 80 band toured Europe (albeit to mixed reviews), EMI re-signed him (re-issuing two of his strongest LPs, *Black President* and *Original Sufferhead*) and Felá himself released *Perambulator,* his first new studio LP in over three years.

Live In Amsterdam, Felá's first new U.S. release in years, documents one stop on that Fall '83 tour which generated speculation (due to his concentration on newer, weaker material, extended monologues and myriad sound problems) that Felá just didn't have it anymore. Happily, *Live In Amsterdam* demonstrates over four sides encompassing nearly eighty minutes of music that his musical powers endure. "Movement Of The People (Political Statement No. 1)," for instance, begins with a wild horn flourish recalling both John Coltrane and royal trumpet heralds, then settles into a slinky groove dominated by a moody electric piano solo. Felá's gritty, constricted voice dances a staccato rhythm in and out of the intricate chant of the female chorus as he outlines a gloomy picture of African oppression by foreign and African business interests. But Felá's flashes of brilliance can't completely compensate for *Live*'s less-than-classic material and the often wooden playing from this edition of Egypt 80.

Perambulator, a 1983 recording featuring Art Ensemble of Chicago trumpeter Lester Bowie, sparkles with compositions and performances that rank with such Felá classics as "Zombie," "Kalakuta Show," "Gentleman" and "Roforofo Fight." The fast-paced title track, driven by a furious organ riff, opens at his fastest tempo ever as the groove launches some trumpet and saxophone solos. The lyrics effectively caricature aimless, superficial bureaucrats who make government their own private joke. The instrumental flipside is nearly twenty minutes of steaming mid-tempo Afro-beat—a familiar rhythm played to perfection and by a mostly different Egypt 80 than appears on *Live*. It's a triumphal riposte to everyone who counts Felá out. – **Randall F. Grass**

JOHN ABERCROMBIE

Night
(ECM)

JOHN SCOFIELD

Electric Outlet
(Gramavision)

Two of the most original and accomplished musicians playing guitar today are obviously aiming at larger audiences by dressing up their jazz, quite attractively I might add, applying just enough makeup to look classy, not whorish. By the way, who *does* their hair?

No, really, these are very good records. At first hearing of *Electric Outlet*, I did feel that the funky mascara was applied a bit too thickly, but when the subtle sophistication (i.e. harmonic

complexity) of Scofield's compositions sank in, I was smitten. Also couldn't help but be impressed by Scofield's unique guitar phrasing, a modernist's union of wit and expression, and extremely captivating lyricism. His handling of the bass parts was competent, though I would have preferred a little more definitive personality. It was a great idea to bring in guest horns David Sanborn and the much-too-seldom-heard trombonist Ray Anderson, who elevate the level of human feeling—check out "Pick Hit," "Filibuster" (the hottest tune of the date) and "Phone Home" (a beautiful melody). Peter Levin's synthesizer blends seamlessly, but Steve Jordan's solid funk drumming is so straightforward it precludes rhythmic interplay.

Hmm, a modern organ (Jan Hammer), tenor (Mike Brecker), drums (Jack DeJohnette) and guitar group. Twenty or thirty years ago, black society called it funk, and with John Abercrombie's powerful and profound guitar at the helm, it works. Abercrombie must have struck a nerve in his associates. Brecker really plays out, with more inspiration than I've heard from him in years; Hammer's playing exhibits more content and less ego than expected; while DeJohnette is typically perfect, anticipating and complementing everyone else's phrasing with amazing sensitivity and verve. The two best cuts are on the ends of each side, "3 East" (in three of course) and "Four On One" (the highlight of the album); even the pastoral "Night" is tough enough. And I think I saw Hammer's "Ethereggae" leaning up against a lamp post on 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue the other day. By now, I've heard Abercrombie in such a variety of contexts that I'm convinced he can do anything. – **Cliff Tinder**

DEVO

Shout
(Warner Bros.)

Back in '78, Devo looked like a pretty good idea. Clad in nuclear-alert chemical suits, these self-proclaimed spudboys acted out the collision between the macro (cruel society) and the micro (frail individuals) with anxious techno-raveups that mocked and lamented the modern world. Audacity only takes you so far, of course, and Devo has not prospered of late. As Devo's first LP in two years, *Shout* ought to signal a rejuvenation. Instead, it leaves you wondering why they bother carrying on.

The fundamental problem with *Shout* is that it crudely attempts to batter you into submission. Never a band known for songwriting, Devo compensates for the unusually feeble material here by cranking up the drum tracks to jackhammer-level volume. In the past, guitars and synths have held flimsy songs together with witty asides; here, they don't get a chance. Worse, Mark Mothersbaugh's amusing worried-man vocals have lost their playful edge; they're now a shout over the din.

The better tracks stand out only by comparison. Both "The 4th Dimension," featuring "Day Tripper" and "Born To Be Wild" allusions, and the vaguely funky "Puppet Boy" boast fuller, more balanced arrangements that result in passable pop. One could argue that Devo remain true to their art by mirroring the pointlessness of contemporary life. Or one could simply say that *Shout* is tedious slop. Up to you. – **Jon Young**

Heaven 17 from page 64

pling, Bowie's "1984."

Did the Mighty Tina require different handling from other artists? "No. It was very similar except for the fact that she could obviously do it a lot better than most people," shrugs Ware. "It's such a pleasure working with someone of such enormous natural talent. It's no effort for her really. We did two takes of 'Let's Stay Together' and both were equally brilliant. It was pointless going on."

And as for "1984"..."It's a funny thing, you know, but all the great soul singers seem to want to play straightforward rock. Even the hip-hop artists do. I mean, Tina'd never even *heard* 'Ball Of Confusion' before I played it to her! I find that astonishing."

The title track of *Penthouse & Pavement* acknowledged the group's prime influence by including the classic female soul voice of Josie James (credited "mystery vocals") to sing the chorus. Strong black female voices have continued to appear on the band's albums. A trio christened Afrodiziak appear on the new one. Karol Kenyon has subsequently embarked on a solo career after making a lasting impact on "Temptation"—among the more striking cuts from Heaven 17's second album, 1983's *The Luxury Gap*.

In retrospect, this second album looks like a turning point in Heaven 17's career. The fact that an album about consumer inequalities should suddenly seem less than novel, conceptually speaking, in 1983 suggests a certain transience in their theoretical perspective. The record spawned some neat tracks; "Crushed By The Wheels Of Industry" *did* manage to sound superpertinent in Britain's deepening Thatcherite winter, and "Let Me Go" gave them ("surprisingly enough," agrees Ware) their biggest American hit so far. Yet overall the clever symbolism of Ray Smith's artwork (three weary manual workers pose before what on closer inspection turns out to be a billboard advertising holidays in the tropics) outstripped rather than enhanced the contents of the grooves; nonetheless, "Temptation" became a U.K. #2 hit single.

The Luxury Gap also saw B.E.F. embrace engineer and Fairlight MCI expert Greg Walsh more closely to the core of the operation. It was substantially Ware and Walsh who worked on the second Tina Turner sessions. Bob Last now faded into the background, with *The Luxury Gap* the last Heaven 17 project to bear his stylistic legacy.

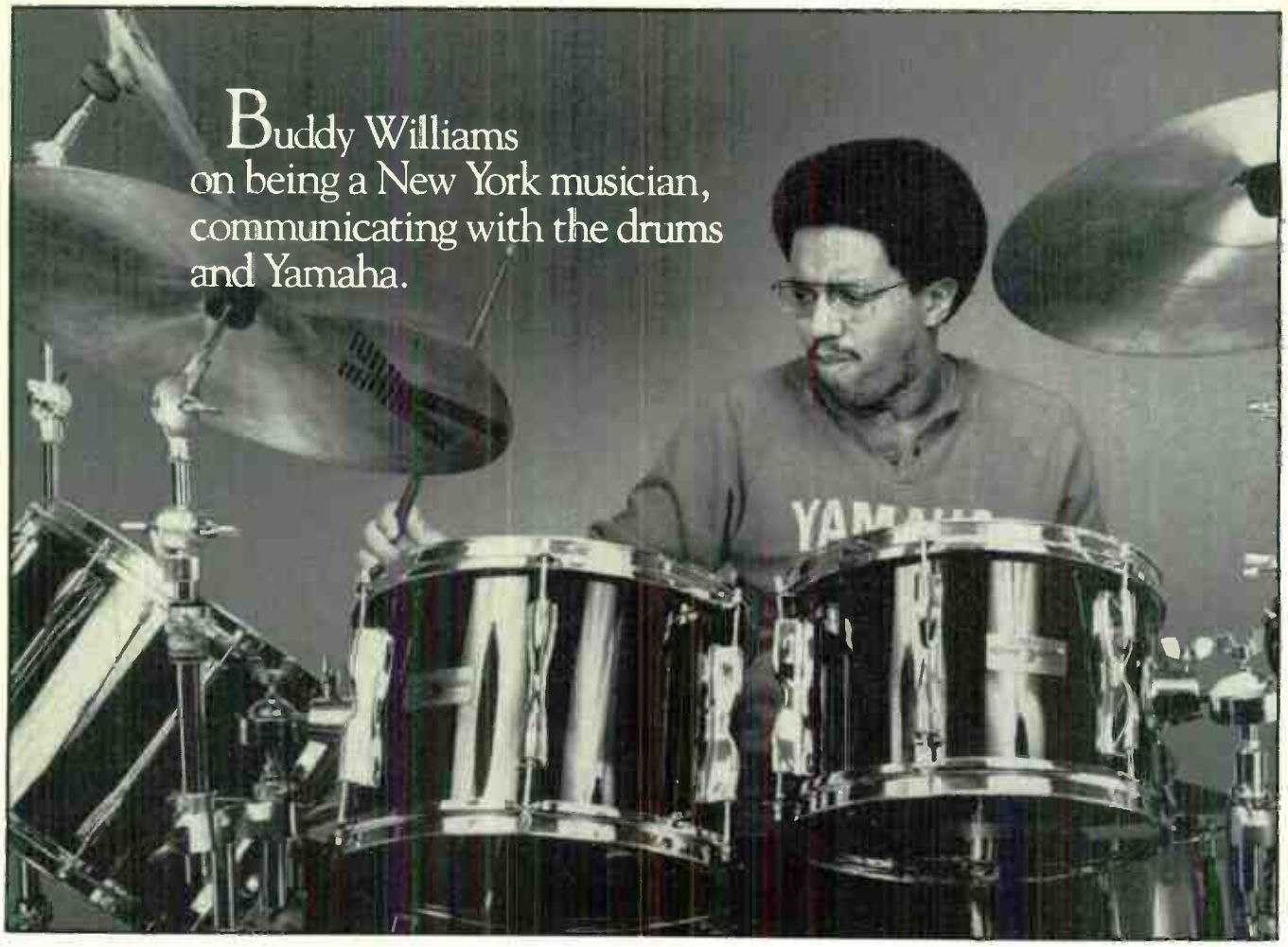
And so on to *How Men Are*. "Oh, the style has altered completely," says Ware, sure of himself; "I'd say it was not as preoccupied with a certain style. It's not directly dance-orientated but nor is it particularly ballad-orientated. It's a combination of the two. I know it's hard to draw parallels, but if you look at a lot of the great Motown songs of the 60s, they were the same; songs which you could certainly dance to, but which stayed in the memory *as songs* as well. That's what we were aiming for. It's not trying to *do* anything," he insists before such a suggestion has really been made, "except be entertaining."

Ware admits that things are slightly different now—"over a period of years you can't help acquiring a certain knowledge, whether you want to or not"—but session players have always been used to embellish the B.E.F. method. "Basically if we've wanted something *played* really well, we haven't done it. There are certain things where extreme sensitivity isn't really critical, like playing basic piano chords throughout a whole song. I can do that. But when the situation requires it, it's much better to employ people who you know can do it much better." Hence a fine utility guitarist like John Wilson contributed bass to funk up the *Pavement* side of the debut, and contributed guitar to both *The Luxury Gap* and their latest. EW&F's Phenix Horns have been used to add an extra dimension where required, and a full orchestra occurs on the opening track of *How Men Are*, a dramatic semi-ballad entitled "Five Minutes To Midnight."

All in all, *How Men Are* is a difficult album to get your teeth into. Melodically few of the tunes ("Sunset Now," an unsuccessful U.K. single release being the exception) really bite at first. Lyrically the whole thing seems obtuse. Is that deliberate or just lazy? What is going *on* here? Well, once you've absorbed the discrete anti-nuclear commitment in the sleeve's small print ("Heaven 17 say No Cruise Is Good News"), taken into account the popular feminist slogan to emerge on the same subject—"Take The Toys From The Boys"—and weighed this against the posturing, silk-shirted actor-figures of yet another Ray Smith cover illustration...once you've chewed over all this...it's hard not to see *How Men Are* as an attempted allegory on the follies and mechanisms of the Apocalypse Industry.

Still, neither Martyn Ware in this interview, nor any of his mates in any other, are being drawn into the subject. When asked to define what's so different about this new release, Ware restricts his explanation strictly to technical details. "I think the standard of songwriting is higher as is that of the arrangements. There is one area which might have suffered because Glenn wasn't really on top of the world when we did one or two of the tracks. But generally there's been more care, more inspiration and more

continued on page 98



"I'm proud to say that I'm a New York musician. My day will consist of a 10, 11 or one o'clock jingle, an afternoon rehearsal for somebody's concert and then I'll either play a club that night or 'Saturday Night Live.' That's four different styles in four different worlds."

"I'm a team person when I play. I don't feel that the band revolves around *me*. If my part doesn't fit in with the rest of the rhythm section, then I'm not making it. I'm not happy.

"I hear these sounds in my head that should go inside the music, the overall sound that we're trying to get across. As musicians, we're trying to *communicate*. If I'm not communicating with the other guys or I'm not feeling right within the music, then we're not getting it over."

"The sound of Yamaha drums are the closest to the sounds I hear inside my head. They let me get across what I hear and what I feel needs to be inside the music. Sometimes I have to hit 'em real hard for loud situations and I know they'll be there. They're dependable. When I played with Roberta Flack, I had to be sensitive enough to do "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" and still get the part across. These Yamahas let me do that.

"Yamaha drums are very personal to me. I've always felt they were the last of the hand made drums. I went to Japan and visited their factory and they wanted to hear my ideas because I was a drummer who played their instrument.

"I don't know what Yamaha's formula is and I don't want to know. I just play 'em, I'm not in the business of making them. I just know they're more *applicable* for what I do than anything else on the market, and I get to play a lot of different drums.

"Sometimes I'll walk into a studio and have to play other drums, but I'll always ask for Yamaha. I was on the road with Dave Sanborn last year and I had to use a straight-out-of-the-box Tour Series set in an emergency and it worked out fine."

"I think of my drums as my 'kids.' Very rarely do I let other people play them unless it's unavoidable, a bottom line situation. Me and my kids have to lock up and have an understanding. It's a *feel*."

The reason why Yamaha System Drums meet the demands of many of today's top drummers is because they're "Drummer Designed." For more information and to receive Yamaha's *Drum Lines* newspaper, write to Yamaha Musical Products, Division of Yamaha International Corporation. 3050 Breton Rd. S.E., P.O. Box 7271, Grand Rapids, MI 49510.

YAMAHA

Modularity from page 66

and Octave Plateau has MIDI-fied the Voyetra 8 module. Yamaha is currently developing a MIDI-based digital/FM synthesis module based on their extremely popular DX-7. It is slated to debut in February, according to a Yamaha spokesman. Judging from the groundswell of excitement and rumor the Yamaha module has already generated, it seems likely that many others will soon be offering rack-mount versions of their best-selling synths.

MIDI-equipped keyboard synthesizers are by no means made obsolete by the modular trend. These synths too can be controlled by a remote MIDI keyboard and kept backstage, off to the side or otherwise out of the performer's way. Because they don't have to be set up for playing, the need for expensive, multi-tiered stands is diminished, as are the awkward "bend and stretch" exercises that multi-keyboard playing generally involves. MIDI keyboard synths can of course be used in combination with modular synths as well.

Freedom of choice is really what MIDI modular equipment is all about. Both the controllers and the modules let the player configure things the way he wants. Rack-mountable synths are less expensive than their full-sized keyboard counterparts, so they can be collected and combined more readily. Because they take up much less space than keyboard synths, they fit easily into the most claustrophobic studio control room and, of course, make life on the road a little bit easier. Ⓜ

Music Processor from page 70

demo we were able to place the song with a major recording artist, which meant re-recording the song on twenty-four tracks. Well, re-recording might be exaggerating a bit, because we just dragged our equipment into the studio, pressed the *play* button, and all of our data spilled out of the sequencer and drum machine once again, onto the master recording.

The exceptional part is this: many of the parts that were originally programmed into the sequencer during those first few days were never played again, all the way to the master recording. So what's next?

MIDI sequencers: more and better and cheaper, with more notes, more tracks, more editing, and disc drives for memory storage (I'm counting the days until I can junk my cassette data recorder for good!). Since sequencing velocity, pressure, wheels and levers eats up memory like crazy (that's why you can always turn them off!), having more memory means that long, complicated sequences with velocity, etc., become feasible. Also, the ability to print

out your sequences on sheet music will become available in more sequencers.

Programming the synthesizer itself is also enhanced by several new software programs for personal computers, particularly for the Yamaha DX7 synthesizer. More sophisticated MIDI sequencers combined with the development of serious MIDI guitar controllers will allow guitarists to program their guitar parts into sequencers for the first time. MIDI drum controllers will also enable drummers to program the sequencers with sticks instead of buttons. One manufacturer is combining a drum machine with a MIDI sequencer into a single unit.

This is not a fantasy that is years away—we're talking six months on the outside for this stuff. Also in about six months the Musician's Union should start grumbling about how all of this new-fangled technology is putting musicians out of work again. Personally I'm working more than ever before because of the technology, but there is a legitimate question to be raised about exactly what constitutes a musical performance: if a musician records his performance into a computer memory (like my friend in New York) and his performance is later replayed at a recording session, should he be compensated, and if so, how?

Well, that is another subject for another time. Right now I'm thrilled to be able to put my music together at home, on my own time and at my own pace. Now, if there were only some way I could sequence the vocals.... Ⓜ

Sampling from page 68

A few years ago musicians were scared of computers—but nowadays you could get run over by the crowds rushing to see the latest digital goshwows at the NAMM and AES shows. Still, to buy wisely means you have to understand things well enough to get an instrument that realistically meets your creative needs and budgetary limitations. The Kurzweil 250 doesn't sample by itself; it needs an additional Macintosh home computer to do that. Do you want to spend the extra money? The Mirage gives you a 15kHz bandwidth, but only for samples two seconds long. Go for four seconds and the bandwidth drops to 8kHz, while eight seconds kicks it all the way down to 4kHz. Can you live with this kind of tradeoff in return for the tremendous savings in price?

So get out there and learn. The manufacturers are banking on your demonstrated capacity to do just that.

Why, both Simmons and Dynacord are now marketing sampling accessories which allow you, for the first time, to "blow" your own EPROMS (translation: record a sound and store it on an IC chip called an Erasable Programmable Memory). Until recently this was considered "too technical" to leave in the hands of mere players, even assuming that anybody would want to in the first place...but now? Now it's a marketing necessity!

And two or three years from now, when this whole second wave has become Old Tech in its inevitable turn, and our attention has turned to samplers that can record minutes (or even hours) of sound, at a level of quality equal to a compact disc, and play even more elaborate games with it...*Sound is Data, Data is Sound, Sound is Data, Data is Sound, Sound is Data, Data is*...

My, won't *that* be fun. Ⓜ

Leavell from page 74

sions for *Undercover*.

This past summer, Mick Jagger asked Leavell to join him at Compass Point Studios in the Bahamas to work on the head Stone's first solo LP. So how's it sound? "Wow, man, it's *great*," Leavell exclaims. "The songs are definitive Jagger. Having worked with the Stones on an album, I can see how some of the songs would not work with the Stones. He's got a good bit of material, he's gonna have a lot to choose from. Again, my role with the Stones and with Mick on his solo project is as a catalyst, to add some color and to make things jell among the different instruments."

Was Mick feeling much pressure to come up with an album as strong as a Stones record? "Jagger...I'll tell you one thing, if he ever feels pressure, he never shows it," says Leavell. "He's a really calm, cool, collected guy. The songs are great—everything I heard turned me on. He's not going to have any problem with people getting into that album."

As for his own work, Leavell often plays around the South with a quartet that serves as an outlet to perform his compositions. He's also had an on-again/off-again band relationship with various members of the Southern rock mafia, including tours this past year with former Wet Willie vocalist/sax man Jimmy Hall, and ex-Allmans guitarist Dickey Betts ("It's no secret that Dickey's not the most consistent player in the world, but when he's on, there's nobody better") and drummer Butch Trucks. In addition, the former acoustic purist has also become deeply interested in synthesizers and conducts clinics for Korg, with whom he has an endorsement arrangement.

But his main concern now is to get a solo album done. "You know every situation I've been in over the past ten years has dictated that I should not do a solo album," Leavell says with some impatience, possibly borne of a quiet realization of the limits to the "whole is greater than the parts" theory. "With the Allman

Leavell from previous page

Brothers, it was, 'Well, wait till the next Allman Brothers album comes out. Then you'll be more valid as an artist.' Then the Allman Brothers broke up, and I put together Sea Level. Then it was, 'Well, if you do a solo album now, it's gonna be so much like Sea Level that you'll distract from that audience.' Then Sea Level broke up, and it was the Stones, and I wanted to wait and do that. So now I'm in a position to say, 'Dammit, there ain't no reason for me not to do it. I'm gonna do it.'"

Hancock from page 60

were holding the record companies' financial picture together. But at the same time, it was almost like having two companies: the white company and the black company.

And the *musicians* don't think that way. I'm not thinking that I'm making superfunk black music for only one audience. I'm making music that I feel is valid and I hope it gets exposed to the people who might like it. So dealing with this competition gave me a problem, because the black music department wanted the credit for breaking the record. That meant the pop department wouldn't even *touch* the record until it was broken on the black stations, in the black market. *Then* if it was cross-over material they'd try to cross it over. But I think that's starting to change because of *video*. Now you see more black groups with rock elements.

MUSICIAN: *"Junku" on* Sound-System *feels like some of the African pop music on the* Sound D'Afrique *anthologies. Have you listened to much African pop?*

HANCOCK: A little. Not a whole lot. I was commissioned to write that by ABC TV for the Olympic field events. I wanted to do a piece of music that had an international flavor to it. I wanted something that had an ethnic undertone, with a kind of American thing on top. Around that same time Bill Laswell, who produced *Future Shock* and *Sound-System*, was working with Foday Suso, who's from Gambia, on ideas for my album. It was perfect timing.

Having the Fairlight has led to some different kind of ethnic rhythms. We sampled a train sound and found that as a rhythm device it can sound real funky and powerful. It was the sound of the clack of the wheels going over the ties. It sounded like, "*Clack clack, rumble rumble, clack clack, rumble rumble.*" We sampled that whole sound and then we honed it down to just the *clack*. I had it over the full keyboard, and I could play rhythms with that sound that sounded really intense and powerful. We used that at the top of "Metal Beat,"

MUSICIAN: *You're one of the very few players who keeps a foot in each jazz camp. Why is that so rare?*

HANCOCK: People have a tendency to get married to something. I decided a while ago that if there's any marriage, it's to *music* and not to *jazz*. It's open-ended. I can do what I want. Since I like all kinds of music, why not play 'em? You take a big chance when you do it. Maybe you won't be so good doing the other stuff. You might lose all your old following and not gain a new one.

MUSICIAN: *But do you feel no obligation to your old fans? There are people who'd love to hear you play just one song from* Maiden Voyage.

HANCOCK: I'm not a chauffeur. *Nobody* would have bought any of my records if I were. I'd have had nothing to say. I'm supposed to be *presenting* things to the public, not accepting requests. I call the shots. They don't have to like it. I really wanted to develop my career in such a way that I have the freedom to do what I want to do, and not have that considered bizarre. I think I'm finally at that point. People are no longer surprised when I come out with something different. I've done it enough now. That's what I've wanted all this time.

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JAZZ

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S

The Complete Blue Note & Pacific Jazz Recordings Of Clifford Brown; The Complete Pacific Jazz Small Group Recordings Of Art Pepper; The Complete Blue Note Forties Recordings Of Ike Quebec And John Hardee; The Complete Recordings Of The Port Of Harlem Jazzmen (all Mosaic). The five-record Clifford Brown marks the first intelligent LP compilation of the charismatic trumpeter's early Blue Notes as a sideman with Lou Donaldson, J.J. Johnson and Art Blakey (*A Night At Birdland*); his first date as a leader for the same label; and a carefree blowing date for Pacific Jazz. Thirty years later, this music still sizzles, and that it belongs in every jazz record collection should go without saying. The three-record Art Pepper dates from the period when the alto saxophonist was chafing against the restraints of 50s West Coast cool; far from enervating his music, however, the resultant tension is what gives it its emotional clout, and not surprisingly, the best of these sessions is the one which nods most overtly in the direction of the East Coast (with Jimmy Heath arrangements and the similarly divided Chet Baker as co-star). Quebec and Hardee are forgotten men of the 1940s—hard boiled tenors whose vulnerability came to light on ballads, a form of which they were masters. The material on the four-record box they split between them will be familiar to only a handful of collectors, as will the bulk of material on the *Port Of Harlem* LP, which features incandescent performances by Sidney Bechet, J.C. Higginbotham, and (especially) trumpeter Frankie Newton — like Quebec and Hardee, a shamefully neglected stylist. But enough particulars. If you're reading this page, the news that there are four new Mosaic Limited editions—and that each upholds the standard of last year's Monk, Mulligan, and boogie woogie sets, with copious alternate takes, previously unissued titles, complete discographies, informative liner essays, vintage photos, quiet pressings, luminous remasterings, rice paper sleeves, and durable boxes—should be all the information you need. Definitive in every way, and available only by mail order from 1341 Ocean Ave., Suite 135, Santa Monica, CA 90401.

Vienna Art Orchestra – *The Minimalism Of Erik Satie* (hatART, from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012); **Pierre Dorge & Jungle Orchestra** – *Brikama* (SteepleChase). The two-record *Satie* represents a gambit even more brazen than last year's *From No Time To Ragtime*—a (mostly) successful (and remarkably faithful) jazz recasting of the music of the flintiest of the French impressionists by vibist Woody Schabata, singer Lauren Newton, and the horns of the Vienna Art Orchestra under the direction of leader Mathias Ruegg, who is quickly establishing himself as a pacesetter in the still largely uncharted field of contemporary big band jazz. Likewise Dorge, a Danish guitarist and big band leader to whom "jungle" signifies the Cotton Club as well as the bush, with harmolodics, Django Reinhardt, Dolphy, dada, and serialist counterpoint tossed in for good measure. Heady music, boldly envisioned and deftly played.

Beaver Harris – Don Pullen 360° Experience – *A Well Kept Secret* (Shemp, 611 Broadway, Suite 415, New York, NY 10012); **Hamiet Bluiett** – *Ebu* (Soul Note/PolyGram Special Imports). The first release on a new label named after producer Hal Wilner's favorite Stooge is one of the year's finest, if only by virtue of being the first to capture the full measure of the versatile band (now defunct, I think) co-led by drummer Harris and pianist Pullen and also featuring Bluiett, Ricky Ford, bassist Buster Williams, and steel drummer Francis Haynes. Meanwhile, the format of the Bluiett LP is ordinary in the extreme—quartet ballads and blues. But the blues come on like gangbusters, the ballads ache, and there's nothing ordinary about the leader, arguably the most talented baritone saxophonist to walk the earth since Chaloff—and perhaps since Carney.

John Carter – *A Suite Of Early American Folk Pieces For Solo Clarinet* (Moers Music/N.M.D.S.). The bluesy gaiety that steals through Carter's octet writing is unaccountably absent from his works for solo clarinet (these are Carter originals, and not very earthy, whatever the album title might imply). On the other hand, unaccompanied recitals like this one allow him more freedom to explore the sonic potential of his instrument, and that's a fair tradeoff, because there is no more resourceful clarinetist currently active in a postmodern idiom.

Count Basie – *Kansas City Style* (RCA). A straight reissue of the long out-of-print *Count Basie In Kansas City* (Vantage), boasting two complete sessions by the Benny Moten Orchestra Basie was soon to inherit (the 1929 "Jones Law Blues" and the 1932 "Prince Of Wales" dates). Since this at least represents a step in the right direction, I'll applaud the reappearance of this paradigmatic music rather than question the machinations that resulted in its disappearance from the catalog in the first place. Now, what about pre-Basie Moten, RCA? And what about the Basie leviathan of the mid-1940s?

Steve Lacy – *Two, Five & Six* (hatART/N.M.D.S.). Another in the long string of exemplary double albums by the soprano saxophonist, this one especially noteworthy for the passion and celerity of his discourses with alter ego Steve Potts.

Jimmy Lyons – *Wee Sneezawee* (Black Saint/PSI). This would be a perfect record if only the jump tempos didn't slow down so perceptibly to accommodate Karen Borca's bassoon solos (the problem is inherent in the instrument, not the player). As it is, though, this still forwards proof that Cecil Taylor's longtime aide de camp is an estimable composer and bandleader in his own right (that he is an estimable soloist no longer needs proving, though his resemblance to Coleman here is bound to turn some heads). And if you've been wondering whatever happened to Raphe Malik...well, here you are.

Francis Davis

How changing your pickup will improve your guitar's sound.

There's a frustrating time in a guitar player's development when you have the fingering right, you're bending the strings at the right time, but you still don't sound the way the record does.

It happened to me when I shared a bill once with Robbie Robertson. (Later he was in The Band.) When we played together between sets, trading off licks, I couldn't get close to the sounds he was getting out of his Telecaster* guitar.

I thought it might be an effects box, but not you can juggle the signal with effects boxes, but you can't improve the original sound except with a pickup. His pickups had more windings and bigger magnets than my stock pickups, and were more sensitive and responsive to hard or soft picking.

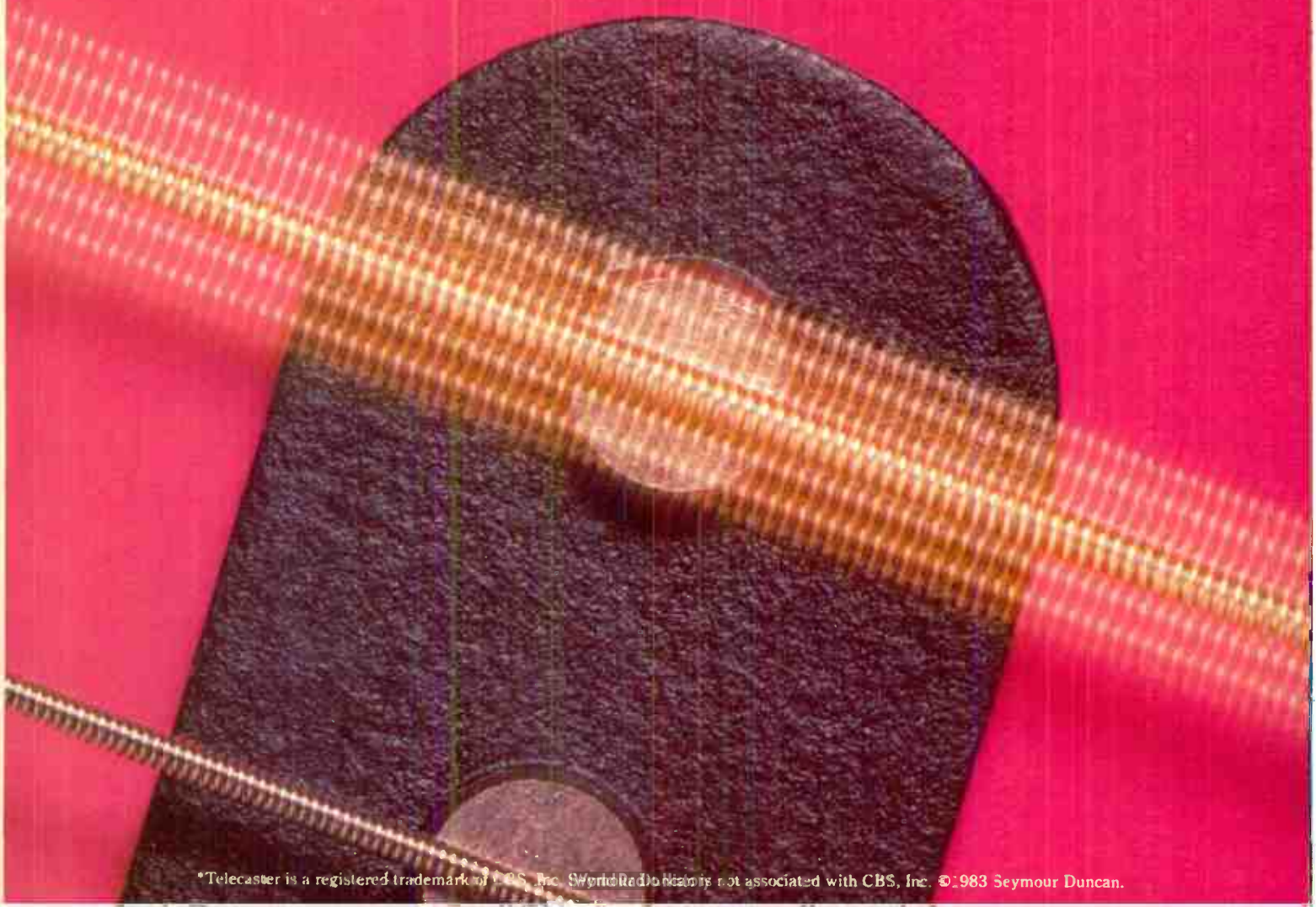
My own Telecaster guitar was so comfortable in my hands, I couldn't bear to play anything else. But it didn't have the professional sound I needed on stage. Putting in a new pickup was like getting a new guitar.

The pickup is the place where sound changes into electricity. The magnetic pole piece magnetizes the string, and when the string vibrates, it moves a magnetic field through wire wrapped around the magnet. The wire resists the field and sends electricity to the amplifier, where the signal is changed back into sound.

With bigger magnets and more wire, you'll put more electricity into the amp, and your guitar will be louder than another guitar through the same amp. With other arrangements of magnets and wire, you can end annoying single-coil hum, get more sustain to work with, and have a better attack.

You can hear how pickups improve your sound at your Seymour Duncan dealer. My replacement pickups will fit right into the pickup holes in your present guitar. (It's a half hour job at most guitar shops.) Ask for a copy of my brochure, "How to Pick a Pickup" or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to 203 Chapala St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101.

Seymour Duncan



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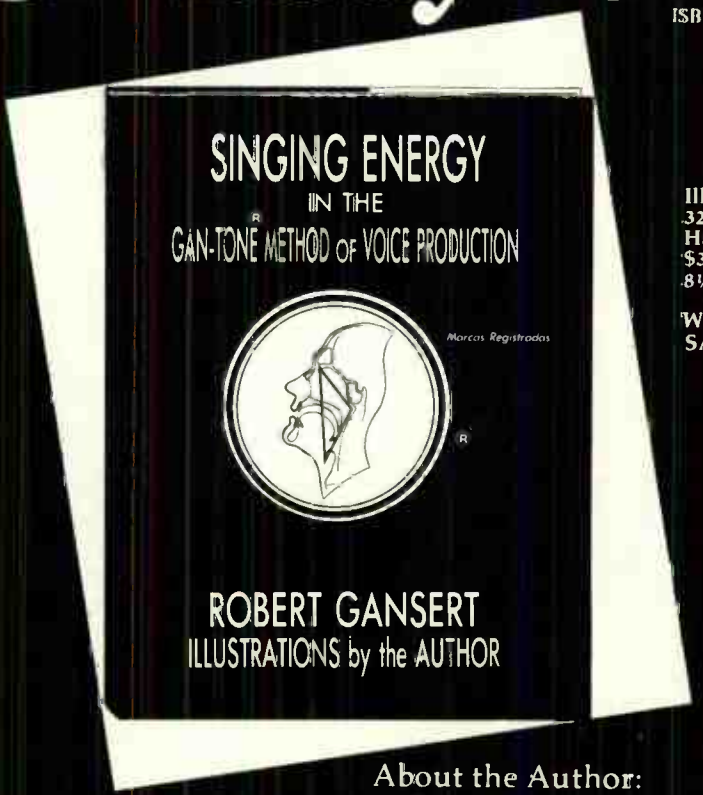

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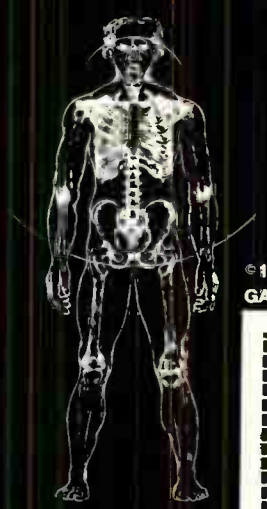

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Jarreau from page 26

ing a recent interpolation of "Blue Rondo" (from the *Breakin' Away* LP) as evidence: "I think I've broadened. Obviously it's not the same format, and hardcore jazzers aren't hearing what they heard before, but I think I've disciplined myself more in the studio. It may not be as attractive for early listeners as some of those wild and woolly performances where each song had a scatted chorus. But," Jarreau laughs, "it *has* become attractive for a lot of people."

In live performance Jarreau hasn't lost an ounce of energy or commitment. He makes a few amends to age by singing in lower registers (even "in an industry that leans more toward boy sopranos," he notes wryly) and warms up before concerts with an hour of solfège (scales). "I learned that in the clubs," he says, "to be second-set ready for the first set." He's also taking acting classes in preparation for an upcoming film role, in which he will portray his early idol Nat King Cole, another pioneering jazz smoothy who became a popular darling. Which is just one more sign that Jarreau has come full circle from those mornings when Nat crooned on Daddy-O Daily, and Al dreamed of becoming a preacher. "Yeah," he says, "it *is* like that onstage now. Very often I'm right up there preaching. It's a pulpit." Ⓜ

Worrell from page 78

servatory—also keeps funk in its place. "This music is easy, it's nothing," he laughs. "For technique you really have to play Bach or Liszt or Ravel. The machine is slowly taking over and we're getting lazier. I won't use a lot of drum machines—or I'll use drum machines *and* real drums, or real clavinet and maybe synthetic clav sound with something else on it coming through the board. It's a new generation of art, synthesizers. What I would do is retain the old, learn the new and mix it. Without the basics this stuff wouldn't be here in the first place."

Just as Worrell seeks a golden mean between technique and technology, he himself exemplifies another ideal balance: training versus instinct.

"People used to say, 'You have to go to school,' but I know great musicians who didn't have any schooling or college. You also have to have experience, the street thing. From the street, you've got all that life and feeling out there coming at you. You filter it and put it back out. You can't feel that through a book." Ⓜ

Heaven 17 from page 86

excellent playing in the horn and guitar departments. More time has been taken over the songwriting. We used the Fairlight on this album which we didn't on the previous ones, true. But that's no big deal. It's just like if your office got a new electric typewriter or something. It doesn't make anything drastically different. It just improves your efficiency."

And that's the end of Mr. Martyn Ware's fish and chips. *How Men Are* does turn out to be a better album than seemed likely at first, though as Mr. Ware steps out into a damp London street and into a taxi, I can't help wondering if yesterday's progressives will turn out to be tomorrow's young conservatives after all. It's silly I know, but I wish he'd worn a suit. Ⓜ

Culture Club from page 51

diose theme, and inauthenticity piles up on both sides. In one of the most jarring images in that video, he's dolled-up to resemble Elizabeth Taylor in a still from *Cleopatra*; it seems to speak volumes—the will to power turns George Sphinx-like, potentially poisonous. But where Culture Club's music and George's image link up most effectively is where their humbler, homemade elements show. The audience he's built, like his friend Joan Rivers, has one figurative question: "Can we talk?" Boy George's monumental career task is to keep the answer affirmative. Ⓜ

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