

MUSICIAN

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NO. 131 SEPTEMBER 1989

**Jeff Beck
Red Hot!**

**Billy Sheehan
Gets Big!**

**Johnny Marr
Fed Up!**



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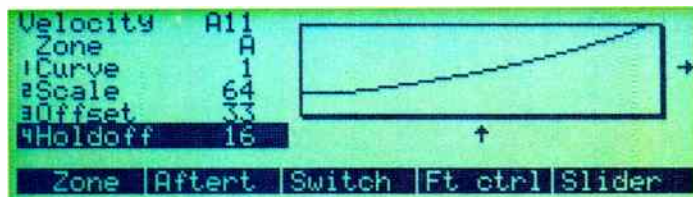
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MUSICIAN

A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION



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ANGELIC GABRIEL

THANK YOU FOR THE WONDERFUL Peter Gabriel article (June '89). The spirit, depth and scope of this modern renaissance genius were beautifully conveyed. I salute Gabriel, his introspective expression and faith.

*Christopher Seaver
Chicago, IL*

JUST A BRIEF NOTE TO EXPRESS my appreciation for Jock Baird's masterpiece on the "master" Peter Gabriel. The fact that articles of this caliber concerning Gabriel are rare compelled me to purchase two copies.

*Kathleen Thomas
Milwaukee, WI*

We hope everyone who enjoys this issue will follow Thomas' lead. — Ed.

YOUR RECENT ARTICLE "PETER Gabriel's Tickle Therapy" mentioned that Gabriel had "a crack cooking staff." In context this may have seemed an appropriate statement; but all I could think was that due to financial woes caused by the lateness of his next album Gabriel had turned to drug manufacturing and trafficking as a new source of income. Please try to be more careful next time.

*Desmond Ryan
Narberth, PA*

I HAVE JUST ONE PROBLEM WITH Jock Baird's otherwise sterling article on Peter Gabriel. Both Gabriel and Baird are a bit too casual in claiming proprietorship of the so-called "Gaseous Cloud Effect" for our hero (Gabriel). After all, Joni Mitchell, for example, has been experimenting with "world music" since 1975. At that time Peter was still merely indulging in the Gaseous *Overblown* Effect, better known as Genesis.

*Douglas Steenhuisen
Westfield, NJ*

SATANIC VERSES

I THOUGHT YOUR POLICY WAS that music brings folks together. Harry Allen's kiss-ass fascination with Tone-Lôc (June '89) and his killing wolves with automatic weapons disgusted me. If Tone-Lôc needs "Weapon City" to get through life, then he knows *shit* about music.

*M. Adams
Chicago, IL*

YO. PLEASE TELL WRITER

Harry Allen that comparing a rap "artist" to Hemingway is like comparing a butcher to a brain surgeon.

*Frank Schraner
Birmingham, MI*

BRO KENENG LISH

YOU'RE USUALLY RIGHT ON, SO imagine my surprise upon reading Chip Stern's review (*Records*, June '89) of Jascha Heifetz and his colleague, Piatig Orsky. Piatig Orsky? Stern must be referring to the Russian cellist Gregor Piatigorsky who died in 1976 after an illustrious career as one of the world's great performers. Maybe not such a big deal to your rock 'n' roll fans, but a blunder or typo nevertheless. Otherwise, keep up the good work. You make a difference.

*Loren Toolajian
WQXR-FM
New York, NY*

CLASSICAL GAS

I'VE BEEN READING YOUR MAGAZINE for 10 years now and always thought that your reviewers were the best of any putting laser to paper.

So what happened to the June issue? Fritz Kreisler? Jascha Heifetz? Kronos Quartet? Keep this up and I'll cancel my subscription to *Gramophone*. Then you will get stuck with being the *only* good music magazine.

Thanks for remembering what my father always called

the "original long-haired music."

*Kit Thomas
Alexandria, VA*

AS AN ASPIRING VIOLINIST PUTTING in the hours now, one thing which dismays me is the lack of "classical" press in music-industry magazines outside of those strictly devoted to that style. How many people out there know that a given guitar wizard could be matched, lick for lick, by any professional violinist? Please print more of the same on the true string acrobats: professional, recording violinists.

*Jessica Fenlon
Appleton, WI*

BITCH, BITCH, BITCH

I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU found critic Kristine McKenna, but send her back. She sounds like a wanna-be rock star; since she isn't, she shits on those who are with her invariably bad reviews. Her critique of House of Freaks (*Records*, June '89) made me so mad I wanted to burn the whole magazine. I saw this group open for the Bangles and they blew the Bangles' shorts off. I know I'm not alone in this view: Get rid of McKenna before she tries to deface every good band in the free world.

*Brett Barrett
Twentynine Palms, CA*

FRIPP STRIKES BACK!

JEFF GAYNOR SUGGESTS ROBERT Fripp is "a snobbish asshole" (*Letters*, May '89).

After many years of being closely involved in Fripp's actions and concerns, I have come to the same conclusion as Mr. Gaynor: Fripp is an asshole. But not a snobbish asshole.

On one occasion a manager said to me, "You can't do that. They'll see the emperor has no clothes." I replied, "But the emperor has no clothes." A performer grows up in public. The frailty of our nature is no excuse for failing to meet our responsibilities. Neither is it an obstacle. We under-

take to meet our obligations despite who we are, as well as because of who we are.

Letter-writer John Garcia suggests I should "come out into the real world." Presumably he means the world of the working musician. After 28 years of climbing into the back of vans and setting off to gigs, my conclusion is that the world of the working musician is quite unreal. My experience also suggests that exposure to the public is rarely pleasant but often remarkably satisfying. And unreal. I am still climbing into the back of vans and setting off to gigs.

Garcia's information on Jeff Beck's picking is more recent than mine; obviously, I haven't been watching every well-established rock player for a few years! My comment on the picking of some celebrated rock legends in no way demeans their capacity as musicians. The quality of their musicianship is quite apparent and needs no defense, neither is it questioned by myself. The point implied in my interview (Feb. '89) was that musicianship triumphed despite picking technique; the music had to get out, whatever it took.

And for your third correspondent, Illona Trejo: The more musicians one meets, the greater the surprise that music gets played at all.

*Robert Fripp
Charles Town, WV*

MINGUS AND MIDI

Stephen Davis writes: "The magazine on which Charles Mingus and I worked was *Changes*, not the loathsome *Fusion* (June '89). *Changes* was mainly Mingus' vehicle for getting even in print with the New York Times' John S. Wilson, who frequently gave Mingus lukewarm reviews."

The list price of the Lexicon MRC MIDI Remote Controller is \$400, not \$600 as we reported in our July issue.

Please send letters to: *Musician*, 1515 Broadway, 39th floor, New York, NY 10036.

TREVOR RABIN

Killer guitarist and principal writer of the last two YES albums, Trevor Rabin has created a solo album that soars with powerful, melodic rock and studio savvy.

TREVOR RABIN *Can't Look Away*

A welcome new addition to a classic tradition.

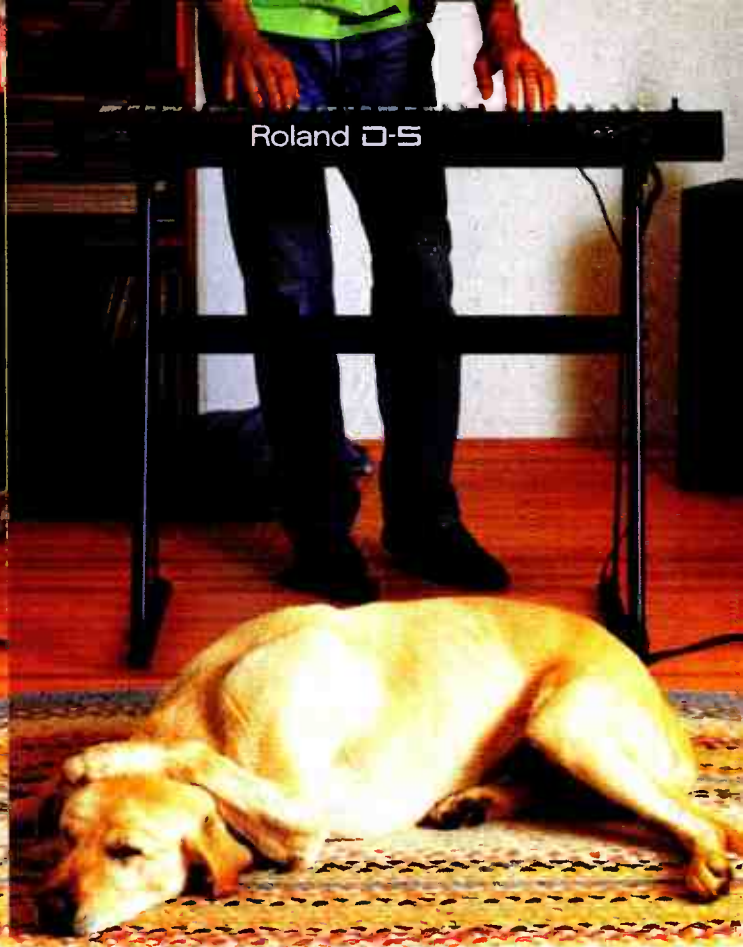
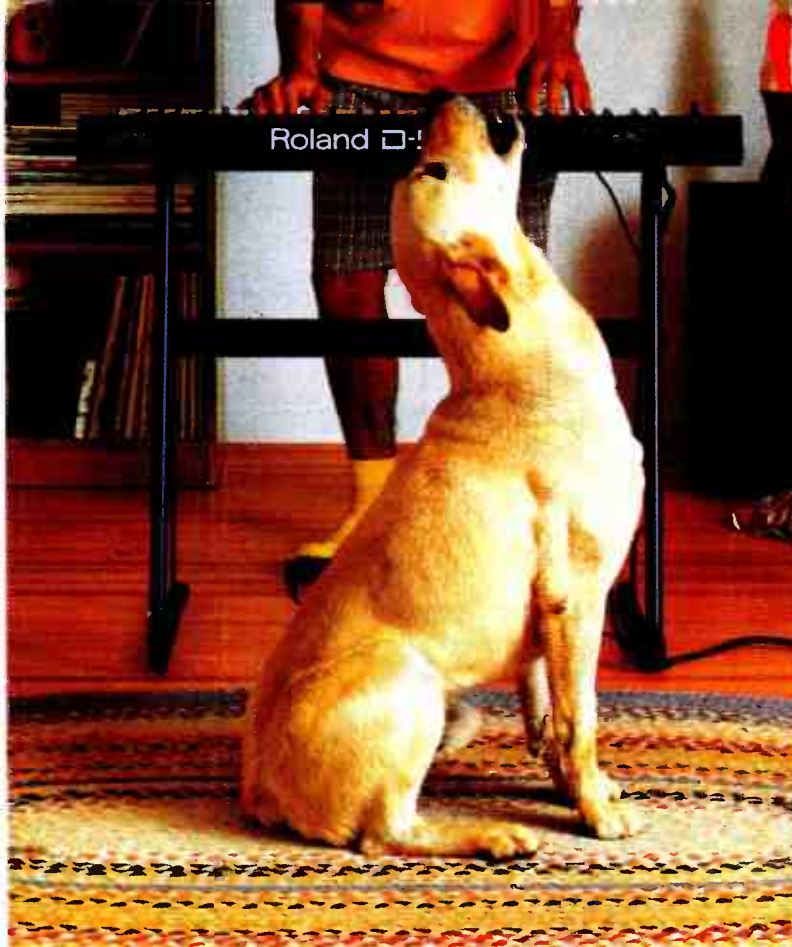
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Produced by Bob Ezrin and Trevor Rabin



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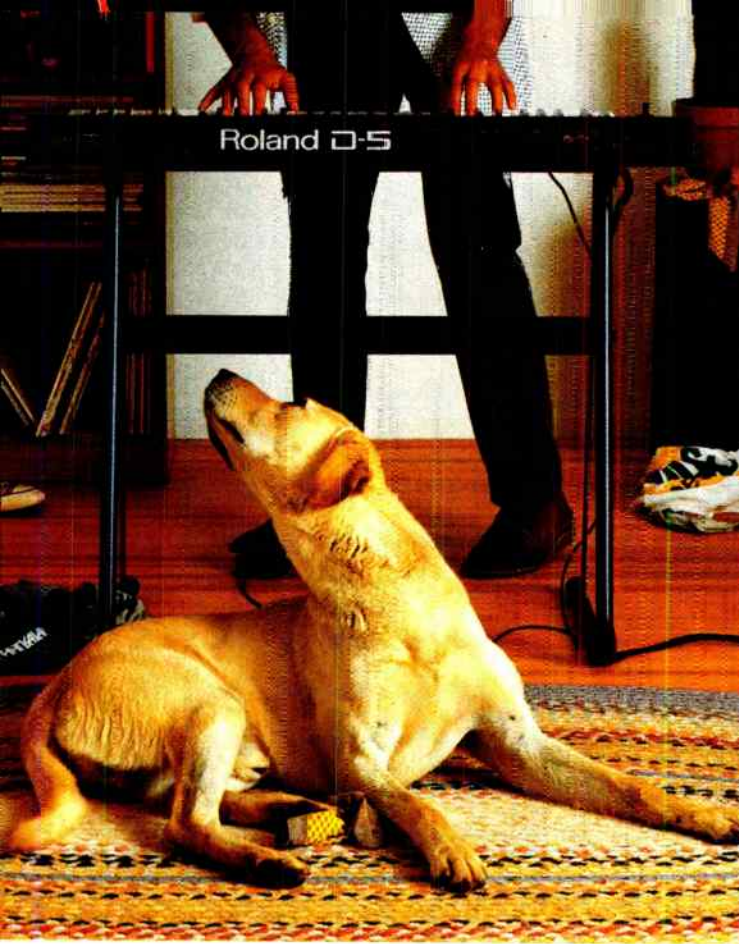


Duffy's not the only one who'll stick with you till you make it.

Oh sure, we know. The only reason you never took up keyboards before is because you knew you'd get yourself a beginner's keyboard to learn on, only to have to move up to a better

one when you started getting good.

Well now that we've come out with the D-5, there's pretty much nothing standing in the way. It's packed with features you'll find



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It even has some performance features our other D-Series synthesizers don't. Chord Play, for instance, which lets you play chords with one finger. Chase, which lets you create all sorts of echo effects using any of your 192 sounds (255, if you count the drum and percussion sounds). Harmony, which harmonizes a melody according to the chords you play in



the lower part of the keyboard. And Arpeggio. You know what that is.

All of which would be pretty hard to keep track of if the D-5 didn't have a 32-character, two-line LCD screen displaying settings for patches, performance and multi-timbral setups, or parameters.

Of course, the thing you'll grow to like best about the new Roland D-5 is that it has the same Linear Arithmetic sound source that you'll find in our D-10, D-20, and D-110 synthesizers. So it sounds particularly awesome when you're on stage. Underneath the lights. In front of hundreds—even thousands—of screaming fans.

You'll see.

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LA (OUT)LAWS

DASH RIP ROCK

YES, DASH RIPROCK WAS A character on "The Flintstones," but this band's name (three words) was originally inspired by the Dash Riprock who was Ellie Mae's suitor

on a few episodes of "The Beverly Hillbillies."

"When we were startin' up in Baton Rouge five years ago, Donna Douglas, who played Ellie Mae, lived in town," guitarist/singer Bill Davis explains. "We thought that if we named our band after her TV boyfriend she might be in our video."

As it turns out, Douglas is a born-again Christian who

would just as soon vote Democrat than appear with these three hell-raisers. Besides, Dash has never really come close to making a video. Shine all those hot lights in front of their eyes and these saloonatics might melt. As underlined by their new LP, *Ace of Clubs*, Dash Rip Rock's element is the dark, sweaty rock cavern, where they've been known to blast hair all

over the walls with their frenetically paced sonic smorgasbords.

Sometimes their brash, often puerile satire inspires a middle finger and a hasty exit, as it did with R. E. M.'s bassist Mike Mills, who didn't find anything funny about Dash's impression of R. E. M. doing AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long."

By paying customers, however, Dash's musical irreverence is usually wildly received; they've long been one of the most popular bands on the Austin/Athens/Albany circuit of college towns and mega-metropoli. They're NRBQ as a Southern rock trio (ZZBQ?), but unlike the Q they don't mind being called a "bar band."

"Hell, 'bar band' is a step up for us," bassist Hoaky Hickie says. "Two years ago we were known as a 'frat party band.'"

"We had to check into detox for a month," Davis adds, "but I'm proud to stand before you and say that it's been one year, seven months and four days since we've played 'Louie Louie.'"

— *Michael Corcoran*



F A C E S

Explosive Chrissie Hynde's Big Mac Attack

One reason we love the Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde is that—like a lot of great rock 'n' rollers—she sometimes talks first and thinks afterwards. But Chrissie's mouth got her into trouble at a June 6 press conference in London announcing the release of the *Rainbow Warrior* Greenpeace benefit album in the western hemisphere. (The Pretenders are on the album, which was originally released in the Soviet Union.)

Asked what she'd done on

behalf of the environmental group, Hynde shot back, "I bombed McDonald's." It seemed funny at the time. Hynde, a vegetarian, is no fan of the fast-food establishment.

It seemed less funny three days later, when a bomb went off during business hours at a McDonald's in Milton Keynes, 30 miles outside London. The shop was evacuated just before the bomb exploded, causing considerable damage.

McDonald's lawyers

claimed Hynde's remark encouraged the bombing, and threatened a lawsuit unless she issued a retraction. On June 15 Hynde and/or her lawyers issued a statement that the "remarks attributed to me at the recent press conference were reported completely out of context" and adding, "I will at no time suggest or imply that I have been responsible for firebombing McDonald's or that anyone should firebomb or cause any other physical or personal dam-

age to the customers, employees, franchisees or the physical property of McDonald's restaurants."

Adding injury to insult, Hynde was reportedly asked to leave the ARK Trust, an environmental group she'd co-founded last December. An ARK spokesperson now says that "Chrissie was and remains a valuable member" of the organization. Hmm. Hynde herself, currently cutting a new album, was unavailable for comment. *This time.* — *Scott Isler*

Who's First

What was the Who doing at Glens Falls Civic Center, an 8,000-seater in upstate New York usually occupied by a farm team for the National Hockey League? Warming up for their twenty-fifth anniversary mega-tour. (The band practiced there prior to the June 21 date.) With a third of the hall lost to a massive stage, 5,000 fans saw a nearly four-hour dress rehearsal proving that the 1989 Who is roadworthy.

The first 100-minute set included tracks from Pete Townshend's *Iron Man* and more than a half-hour of *Tommy*; the second was a greatest-hits grab-bag that emphasized *Who's Next*. Steve "Boltz" Bolton handled the hulk of the electric guitar work, though Townshend's mostly acoustic strums and John Entwistle's thunderous bass runs were the few distinctive sounds in the instrumental wall. A five-piece horn section wore out its welcome after *Tommy*, taking songs like "Sister Disco" closer to the thing ridiculed and intruding on an otherwise epic



"Won't Get Fooled Again." Whether or not Roger Daltrey could still hit that song's climactic scream, the instruments drowned it out to make him—and the point—moot.

This was not "David Fishof Presents" but a genuine celebration of a body of work, comparable to Bowie's *Serious Moonlight* tour in its ability to

please without pandering. Townshend still does the occasional windmill while Daltrey struts but, thankfully, they don't feel the need to fly on wires to goose a crowd. Like Daltrey's microphone twirls, they may have started a bit rusty but they paid off in the end.

There was little beyond a playful encore of "Twist and Shout" to surprise the

crowd, but much to excite them in a night that ran the gamut from "Pictures of Lily" to the new Townshend project. Personally, this writer wouldn't attend the Second Coming at Giants Stadium, but for those willing, the Who proved in Glens Falls why they can still sell it out. The Folks Are Alright.

— Maria Anne Meyer

PRINCE AND THE KING MAVIS STAPLES

MAVIS STAPLES SAYS PEOPLE keep asking her these days, "How does it feel to be working with Prince?" "And I say, 'Well, how does Prince feel working with me?' I don't mean it in no bad way, but just to let 'em know..." She doesn't finish the sentence, but she doesn't need to.

... To let 'em know that Mavis, veteran lead singer of the Staple Singers, has been in music longer than Prince has been alive.

... To let 'em know that Mavis is aware her vocal arsenal has been raided by the likes of Stevie Wonder,

Michael Jackson and Prince.

... To let 'em know, as her new, partially Prince-produced solo album hits the street, that this is not exactly Vanity or Apollonia we're talking about here.

"That's where I really appreciate Prince," she says, "because he didn't try to turn me into something else. I think Prince realized if he had, I wasn't going that way. When his manager called [to say Prince had some songs for her] I said, 'Well, what would Prince write for me?' I'm a grown woman, and I've heard what Vanity was singing, what Apollonia was singing. I mean, *really*, what would he write for me?"

What Prince, along with Stax veterans Homer Banks, Lester Snell and Al Bell, put together for Mavis was a

warm and gritty little gem of an album, *Time Waits for No One*. It's an album that ranges from mellow, folksy soul to itchy, minimalist funk, but never forgets who is the star of the show. Indeed, Mavis' hoarse, harshly sweet voice has seldom had a better showcase.

For Mavis—a chatty woman who's been in the business for nearly 40 of her 50 years—the album must come as sweet vindication for all the time she and the family have been off radio while her musical protégés made hay.

"My thing," says the once and future gospel singer, "was to keep saying, 'Jesus, this is my gift, this voice you've

given me. I don't even know what key I sing in. I don't know any music. I just started singing. And you're not keeping me to suffer. You're keeping me for a reason.'"

— Leonard Pitts, Jr.



DEPRESS TO PLAY

PUSSY GALORE

IMAGINE THE WORST. YOUR head, sucked into the screaming turbine of a 747 engine. Or being strapped down into a dentist's chair, then getting your teeth drilled straight through the bottom of your jaw.

For three years now, New York's Pussy Galore has been packing enough angry high-end to make your fillings spin. And *Dial 'M' for Mother-fucker*, their newest album? Ear-shredding, Death Row twitching on a monstrous scale. The soundtrack for a train wreck.

"Before this started, I was depressed most of the time," leader Jon Spencer admits. "I wanted to be in a band, to do something that made me happy. I wanted people to like me for it."

And what's not to like? Three barely tuned, meat-grinder guitars. Demolition

drums (stickman Bob Bert is ex-Sonic Youth). No bass, but lots of ugly, toothless vocal ranting. Drawing *very* loosely on early Stones, Stooges and the spirit of every '60s garage combo too awful to land a deal, Pussy Galore's sloppy sonic bludgeonfest makes the average fare at CBGB sound like chamber music.

But Spencer's no battle-scarred guttersnipe. He did time at Brown U., and admits

bandmates Neil Hagerty and Kurt Wolf are "very good guitarists." Even Greil Marcus (writing in *Artforum*, no less) called the Galore's output "the search for the utterly heedless."

Godawfulness by design? Probably. Still, the band's been getting memos. Their label wants a "breakthrough" album.

"Depressing," says Spencer, who then concedes he "used to be into fucking

with people more," and that Pussy Galore is inching away from kidney-pulverizing din toward something a tad more... accessible.

But Christmas specials with Kenny Rogers? Opening slots for Bon Jovi? Spencer's doubtful. "People have always had a hard time figuring us out," he says. "I think things'll always be a little fuzzy, a little messed up. I still don't think many people get it." — *Dan Hedges*



ECLECTIC LIGHT ORCH.

ORDINAIRES

IT'S A NEW-MUSIC CABARET ACT. It's a chamber rock combo. It's a genre-smashing party

machine. It's serious fun. It's the Ordinaires, and they're out to reinvent the rock band in their own image—one that includes three strings and two saxes, and embraces multiple musical styles while strangling a few others.

With the release of *One*, their second album, the scale of the band's mission advances. Where else will you find echoes of Kurt Weill, Gentle Giant, a weave of Jimi Hendrix "Manic Depression" riffs and mock-Mozartean writing, and a version—fairly faithful, at that—of Led Zepelin's "Kashmir"?

It began in 1981 with Off-Beach. Violins and cello then joined the sax-and-guitar lineup of the original group. Altoist Fritz Van Orden and tenor saxist Kurt Hoffman began writing funky pieces, etudes of interlocking rhythms and intersecting lines.

By creating a demolition derby of high and low musical idioms, the Ordinaires quickly gained a reputation as a unit with tongues in cheeks. But there's more than crackpot iconoclasm at work. "Quite a lot of our stuff isn't a

parody or a send-up or anything besides basically what it is," Van Orden insists. "We like to have fun. We enjoy performing. There are things we do that are witty, but we certainly like to think they have musical content as well."

Van Orden is practiced at dodging accusations of willful eclecticism and postmodernist mannerism. "I don't really think of us as an eclectic ensemble. We can do a lot of stuff, but I still feel we have our own sound. Is a symphony orchestra an eclectic ensemble because they play both Haydn and Stravinsky?"

No, but they don't usually play them both in the space of one piece. Van Orden laughs, "Well, then we're ahead of them, aren't we? But the point certainly isn't eclecticism. The point is interesting music that we like to play, and not particularly being caught in one rut." — *Josef Woodard*

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OLD JAZZ, NEW BOTTLES

The Compact Disc
Revives Classic Recordings
—or Does It?

BY JEFFERSON GRAHAM

THE SUCCESS of compact discs has nearly killed off vinyl, filled record company coffers and reactivated baby-boomer interest in popular music. Its effect on jazz has been even more profound, with many new releases and far more reissues going on the market than at any time in recent memory. CDs are popular because they're durable, lightweight, easy to use—but mostly because they have a reputation for sounding better than conventional LPs. That's a problem when marketing vintage jazz, though, simply because much of the music recorded in the '20s and '30s sounds, well, old, with a tinny range of sound and lots of surface noise. The labels have responded, in many cases, by employing electronic techniques to remove that surface noise and expand the overall sound of recordings—in essence altering the experience of hearing historically important and influential performances by many of the great jazz artists.

To some fans this is a wonderful thing: music minus the nicks, clicks and pops that can make vinyl so annoying. To others, the process is criminally destructive, with one prominent critic calling it "the colorization of music." About all that's undisputed, notes Dan Morgenstern, the respected head of Rutgers University's Institute of Jazz Studies, is that within the jazz community "it is the subject of quite a heated debate."

One controversy surrounds RCA's recasting of virtually its entire stock of '20s and '30s jazz through a system called NoNOISE. The process was invented by San Francisco-based Sonic Solutions, self-described as a "high-speed computer-run program... designed to remove virtually all imperfections and aural distractions... commonly associated with vintage material, with-



out substantially altering the basic recorded sound."

Veteran producer Orrin Keepnews (Thelonious Monk, Bill Evans), who has produced most of the RCA Bluebird jazz reissues, says that NoNOISE gives "the most acceptable, feasible and accurate way to hear the music. NoNOISE isn't perfect, but it's a damn big improvement to hear the music as God intended us to hear it, without the tons of crud that had always been associated with the music."

NoNOISE's most prominent critic has been *Village Voice* columnist Gary Giddins, the author of two authoritative books on Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker. "The only good thing about NoNOISE is that it takes away the surface noise," he contends. "If you put on a vinyl album without NoNOISE back to back with the CD with NoNOISE, there's no comparison. The CDs with NoNOISE lose all the vitality of the music." Columbia Records staff producer Michael Brooks concurs: "They sound dead. They are very clean, but they're like an embalmed body. There's no life to them."

Another NoNOISE complaint concerns "drop-outs," where small holes of dead space break up the performances. The *New York Times*' Peter Watrous complained about drop-outs in his review of RCA's *The Great Ellington Units* CD, which is among the more prestigious holdings in that company's catalog.

Two years ago Steve Backer, a former Impulse and Arista jazz executive, was hired by RCA to get the label back into the jazz business with current

product and reissues. Since then he's overseen the release of a treasure trove of jazz, much of which has been out of print, by such musical forefathers as Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller, Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines and Duke Ellington. Backer's take on NoNOISE: "I couldn't feel proud of putting out these reissues had we not come up with a system to deal with the surface noise. The CD medium enhances the positives *and* the negatives. The noise gets exacerbated by the CD. If the system has flaws, and is less than perfect, it's by far the lesser of evils."

Backer insists that NoNOISE does not distort the music. "It's a subjective reaction. For every negative review we get, we get 10 positive ones. We tested other systems that did affect the music on the high and low end. This one didn't."

"The music isn't going to sound the same as it used to," he admits. "We're not making these records for the avid collector. It might sound a little different than the way he remembers it, because there is less noise. We're trying to reach out to new consumers."

Giddins' attack on RCA's use of NoNOISE as "the colorization of music" makes Keepnews fume. "It was a cheap shot," he says. "Colorization is the addition of color for commercial purposes to a black and white movie; the equivalent of that was the addition of artificial stereo in the 1960s and '70s, when labels said, 'People won't listen to mono anymore.' That's colorization."

"We are cleaning up the sound quality. I equate what we do with what the Amer-



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ican Film Institute is doing when it restores its old negatives. That's the parallel I would use."

The NoNOISE process costs the labels roughly \$5,000 per album for the two-week job. Besides vintage jazz, NoNOISE has also been used on recent remixes of 1960s live recordings by Jimi Hendrix, the Grateful Dead, the Doors and Santana. Until recently RCA has been the only label to use Sonic Solutions' services for jazz reissues. But Keepnews, who has produced a series of reissues for MCA/Decca (which began in June with CDs by Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong and Art Tatum),

has used NoNOISE there as well.

Columbia Records, which along with RCA has the largest archive of vintage jazz (each label has reissued about 100 collections since 1987), won't use NoNOISE: "We feel it alters the sound," says Jazz Masterpieces series director Mike Berniker. But Columbia has its share of criticisms to contend with. In an attempt to make *Louis Armstrong: Hot Fives, Vol. One* sound contemporary, for instance, so much bass was added to the mix that it changed the sound of the band. Or take Columbia's reissue of Benny Goodman's classic 1938 *Live at Carnegie Hall* concert: Again, the re-

mastering was so bass-heavy that Allan Reuss' short guitar break at the end of "I'm Coming Virginia," which is clear on the original vinyl version, is virtually inaudible on the CD.

Berniker admits to early errors and says he is working with different engineers now. "What happens sometimes is you try too hard. We did a lot of things in the beginning I'm not too happy with, but I think we're doing a lot better now."

The most radical approach so far to the presentation of historical jazz comes from Australia, where engineer and jazz enthusiast Robert Parker has been working for 30 years on a system that presents vintage music for modern ears.

Parker originally produced many public-domain performances for England's BBC and for the Australian Broadcasting Company, and releases them on CD for BBC and ABC Records. Mobile Fidelity distributes the BBC Records label in the U.S. There are 14 titles under "The Robert Parker Collection" by Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Bix Beiderbecke, Johnny Dodds, Eddie Lang/Joe Venuti, along with New Orleans, Chicago and New York anthologies.

"The difference between my approach and the others in the field is that I don't want it to sound like a 78," says Parker. "What I'm doing is an attempt to capture the spirit and vibrancy of the original performance. I'm trying to put together a collection for the younger generation to introduce them to this early music without inducing them into terrible labor to listen to it."

Parker won't reveal exactly how he does that, but basically he gets mint 78s, transfers them to digital tape and adds reverb to the mix. The result is a two-track digital stereo mix of music from the 1920s and '30s that sounds as if it actually could have been recorded in the LP era. To purists, however, what Parker has done with Armstrong, Ellington, Morton and Waller is a bit much.

"I'm glad [Parker] did all that work," says jazz writer Nat Hentoff. "But adding false stereo is like rewriting history. It doesn't seem right."

Parker insists that Hentoff is off base. "What is history?" he asks rhetorically. "The 78 is a distortion of history. What I'm doing is rediscovering what happened and simulating the sound quality like they would have if they had had better equipment. A lot more was recorded on these discs than people ever realized. There is a lot of information still left in those grooves. We play the record correctly, and that is an art in itself."

Parker's results are sometimes "mar-

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velous and astonishingly good, bringing out some new dimensions in the music," while at other times "slightly disturbing," says Dan Morgenstern. Parker's Bessie Smith reissue, for instance, "has way too much echo on her voice."

Indeed, Parker's work, while remarkably noise-free and clear, *can* sound a bit strange at times. Sometimes the stereo echo is so strong that it sounds like a bad 1960s stereo remix of a 1950s mono album. Parker admits that when he began he was much too liberal with the reverb machine, and says he's toned it down. But he insists that "it's essential that you have [the reverb] to make the

system work."

On the RCA and Columbia reissues, various scapegoats for poor sound quality have been outmoded equipment (the older Sony models instead of the newer Mitsubishis), rock engineers who weren't familiar with vintage jazz and plain laziness. But in the end, as Morgenstern puts it, "any system can only be as good as the source material. They can't work miracles. If they get a flawed source, the CD isn't going to sound very good."

The process of seeking out originals begins with the label. Any music prior to 1949 predates the beginning of "the tape era," which means that for reissues of

any jazz prior to that date, archivists have to be creative.

There are three kinds of sources to choose from, according to Keepnews: "Original metal parts, when they exist, and when they are in good enough condition to be transferred to tape; source material from previous reissues; and, if that doesn't work, you turn to the record collectors of the world and seek out original pressings [78s]."

Keepnews begins his Bluebird projects by going to New York and searching the RCA vaults to see what's available. If the metal parts have deteriorated, or if the analog remasters from the 1950s are not up to snuff, he will search out 78s. Then he transfers them onto digital tape and remasters them, and flies home to San Francisco, where the NoNOISE process is done.

This leads us to another bone of contention regarding early jazz CD reissues: how much gets allotted per CD. Vintage reissues aren't being produced for the vinyl and cassette market, after all; the majority of sales (over 60%) go to consumers who already had these records in their library and are buying them again to have better sound and the convenience of the CD.

Very few of these CDs are re-released LPs, as the original tracks were put out as three-minute 78s. So most reissues tend to be compilations. Since a CD can hold up to 74 minutes of music (sometimes more), it's reasonable to expect more minutes of music on these CDs than you would on a vinyl LP. Reasonable, but not always accurate.

Columbia/Portrait's recent two-disc Duke Ellington *Braggin' in Brass*, for instance, is an overview of the 1938 output of that great band. Both discs have just 39 minutes of music—about as much as a vinyl album would. At an average price of \$22 for the set, the producers could have easily fit at least 15 more minutes of additional music per disc. "What they did here," says Gary Giddins, "is like what it would have been like if they had started putting out one-sided LPs in 1955."

RCA has taken heat for their three-disc Ellington *Blanton/Webster Band* set, which originally cut off the endings to a couple of tunes and, incredibly, omitted the Duke's famous piano intro to "Take the A Train." The label has stopped working with the producer of that project. On the other hand, there is at least 70 minutes of music per disc. In fact, all the RCA reissues have had at least 60 minutes of music, along with lower list prices than Columbia. RCA's CDs tend

CONTINUED ON PAGE 105

Guitar Monsters on ECM

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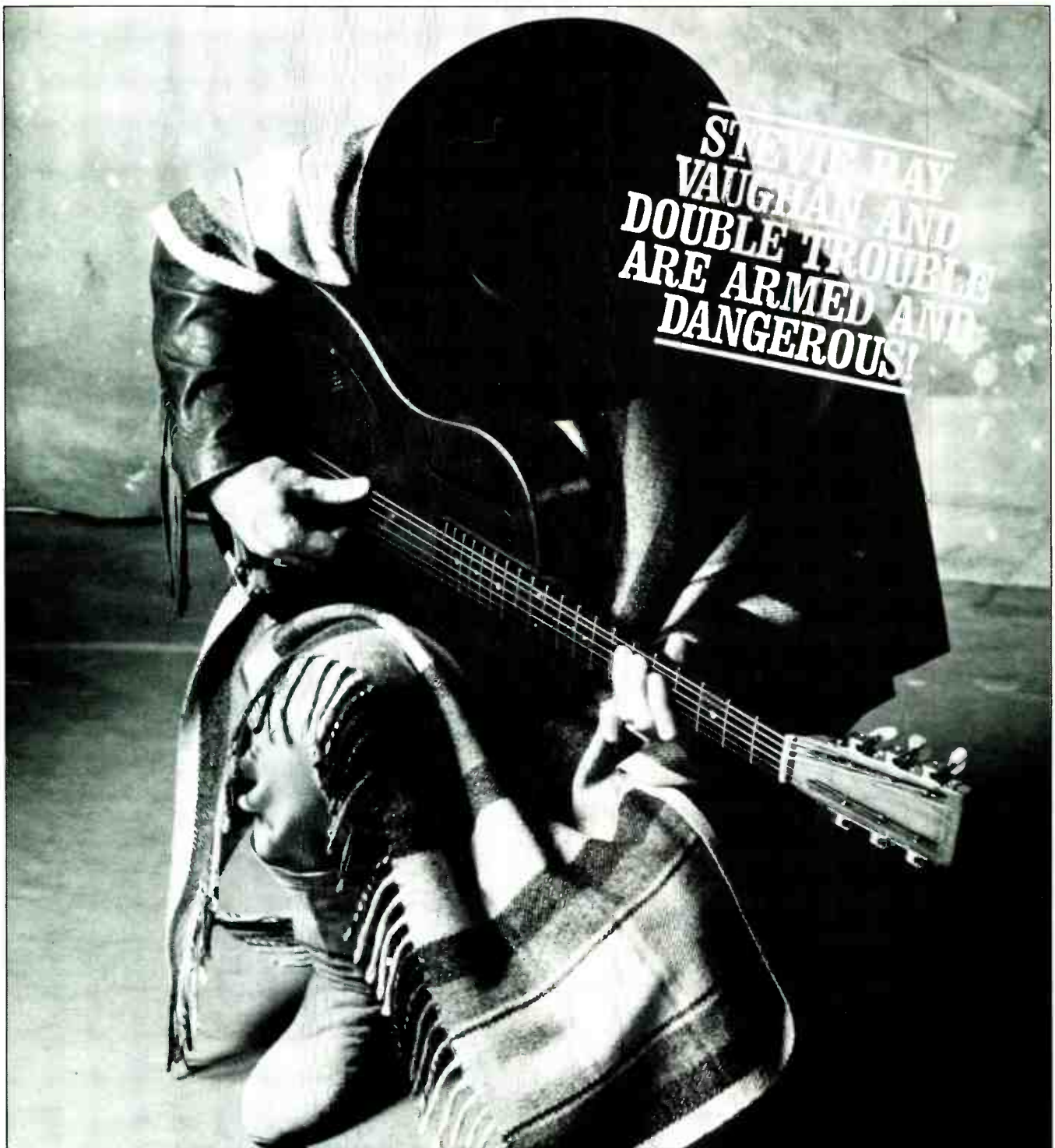
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FIREHOSE

The Minutemen's
Spirit Goes
to Mexico

BY DUNCAN STRAUSS

ANOTHER SATURDAY night, another Firehose gig. At first glance, it might look like business as usual for the trio from San Pedro, California as they roar through a ferocious set of folky, funky, punky, jagged, oddly appealing Osterizer rock.

The audience, easily 1000 strong and almost exclusively the sort of collegiate types you'd see at any Southern California show by this troika of Regular Joes, isn't letting the room's sweltering heat stand in the way of going absolutely bonkers. There's fierce activity on the dancefloor; if slam-dancing is antiquated, these people haven't heard—or don't care.

The venue, called Iguana's, is a cavernous tri-level structure, with chain-link fencing on and around the three tiers. Clinging to the ceiling is serpentine scaffolding connected to the lighting rigs above the stage and the large cement dance floor, as well as long, thick stretches of what appear to be ventilation pipes—though given the room's sauna condition, you wonder if they're spewing *hot* air. The lower portions of the ceiling are dotted with red lightbulbs protected by little grate covers, extending the stylish warehouse motif. And, oh yeah: Iguana's is in Tijuana, Mexico. But given the composition of the SRO crowd—nary a Mexican national in sight, except behind the bar—and the \$17 cover charge, it could just as easily have been a large hall in nearby San Diego. And *should* have been, from the standpoint of Firehose bassist extraordinaire/chief spokesman/primary lyricist/guiding conscience Mike Watt.

"We should have been playing a college campus in San Diego," Watt, 31, says afterwards. "That was really bad. I really feel like a dick for being a part of that. I think the day of the Yankee Imperialist thing is kind of out of fashion, man. That's exactly what I felt like. Even



Ed Crawford, George Hurley, Mike Watt: Is the best yet to come?

the security crew was American. I mean, you could only get your tickets through Ticketmaster. It was only promoted in San Diego. It was very dishonest in a way. We should have been playing in San Diego, saved everybody the drive, the shame and everything else."

You grab such insights where you can because, while Watt, George Hurley and Ed Crawford (a.k.a. Ed Fromohio) are three of the most approachable, affable, down-to-earth guys you'll ever find together in a rock band, conversations with them (especially Watt) are like their lyrics: listener-friendly, but often oblique, impressionistic, darting lickety-split from idea to idea, brushing up against self-revelation, but rarely plunging all the way in. What Watt says, in songs and in discussions, often requires you to connect the dots.

This much we know: Firehose formed a little over three years ago, playing its first show June 14, 1986, and in that time, the trio has released three albums: *Ragin' Full-On, if'n* and the latest, *FROMOHIO*, plus a three-song EP, *Sometimes*. Watt and Hurley were two-thirds of the Minutemen, a pioneering, inventive and prolific indie force that turned out some post-punk masterpieces, including *Double Nickels on the Dime*. The band's career was cut short in 1985 when bearish singer/guitarist D. Boon was killed in an auto accident.

Watt was devastated; he couldn't even bring himself to attend the funeral. He had grown up with D. Boon, formed the Minutemen with him and didn't give two

seconds' thought to recruiting a fret-sliding replacement and carrying on under the Minutemen moniker. In fact, he withdrew from music altogether for a while. He was coaxed back in a little by his wife Kira, former Black Flag bassist, who persuaded him to resume playing and writing material that would later wind up on records by Firehose as well as the pair's bass-duo project, Dos.

He was subsequently coaxed back into music *a lot* by Crawford, then a smooth-faced 21-year-old from Ohio. Crawford, a trained trumpet player (who, as a lad, had taught himself acoustic guitar by playing along with James Taylor records), underwent something of a religious experience the first time he caught a Minutemen show.

"I was just amazed—my mouth was agape," Crawford, now 25, recalls. "I had never really seen anything like it before. Nothing had prepared me for what they were doing. I'd really missed the heyday of the hardcore punk-rock thing. This was probably around the time of *Double Nickels on the Dime*—that's the first time I saw them on tour, and I was shocked and amazed. I couldn't believe how good they were."

Crawford was a changed man; he'd suddenly become the consummate Minutemen fan and now, when he'd hole up in his room to play guitar along with records, the guitar was electric, the records Minutemen. Not surprisingly, Crawford also was severely shaken by the news of D. Boon's death. But, after a time, he made a bold move. He called

Watt, saying he wanted to audition for him. But Watt wasn't auditioning players. Crawford called again—this time having traveled to Southern California, pleading with Watt to let him come over and play.

Watt relented, and the two had a go at some Who stuff and several Minutemen tunes. At that point, Crawford was longer on courage and enthusiasm than experience; he'd never played a professional band gig. But one of the next calls was from Watt to Hurley, and Firehose was off and running, maintaining a hectic schedule of touring nationally, performing frequent L.A.-area shows (including

numerous benefits) and feverishly cutting albums. Indeed, the trio's about to start recording their fourth one—the subject at hand as Watt sits outside Iguana's. He says that *fROMOHIO* was atypical in that it featured a lot of material left over from *if'n*: "Edward's songs weren't left over, but all mine were," Watt says. "I only wrote one new song for that record, 'Somethings.' All of them were *Iran-contras* era, when those trials first started to come out. That was right when I was writing for *if'n*—"

He's interrupted by a young couple, beside themselves with excitement at running into Watt, wondering if he re-

members listening to a Lakers game with them just before a Firehose show. He's polite as he greets the pair, recalls the details of both the game and the gig, and informs them he's in the midst of an interview.

This is how he picks up the conversation: "I shouldn't have to be ashamed about being in the Minutemen. There's that problem. The problem was D. Boon getting killed. It's always been a problem, and it always will be for me. There's no solution for that. But I can make a band with Edward, a new band, Firehose. So it's hard. I've been trying to say, 'Well, I'll throw all that behind me.' But I can't, I don't want to and I don't think I should have to. And now all that baggage is on Edward.

"We never planned on this, we never discussed it. But what do you do, man, what do you do? But this will be more of a Firehose album, probably, than the other three. But, truly, a lot of these songs I could never have written for D. Boon. I do think the *Double Nickels* album is the best album I've played on..."

What's the best Firehose album you've played on?

"I don't know yet. I don't think I've done it yet. And it really ain't Edward's fault; it's Watt's fault, because when I'm writing the right bass part, Ed will sound good. So the burden is on me, and it should be. It shouldn't be on Edward. Edward's pressure should be in getting out in front of people. I really give him a lot of credit. But the Firehose story—it's hard for people to put in perspective, I guess. That guy dies and you should have an audition for the greatest man to replace him. But to me, that's not a band.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 68

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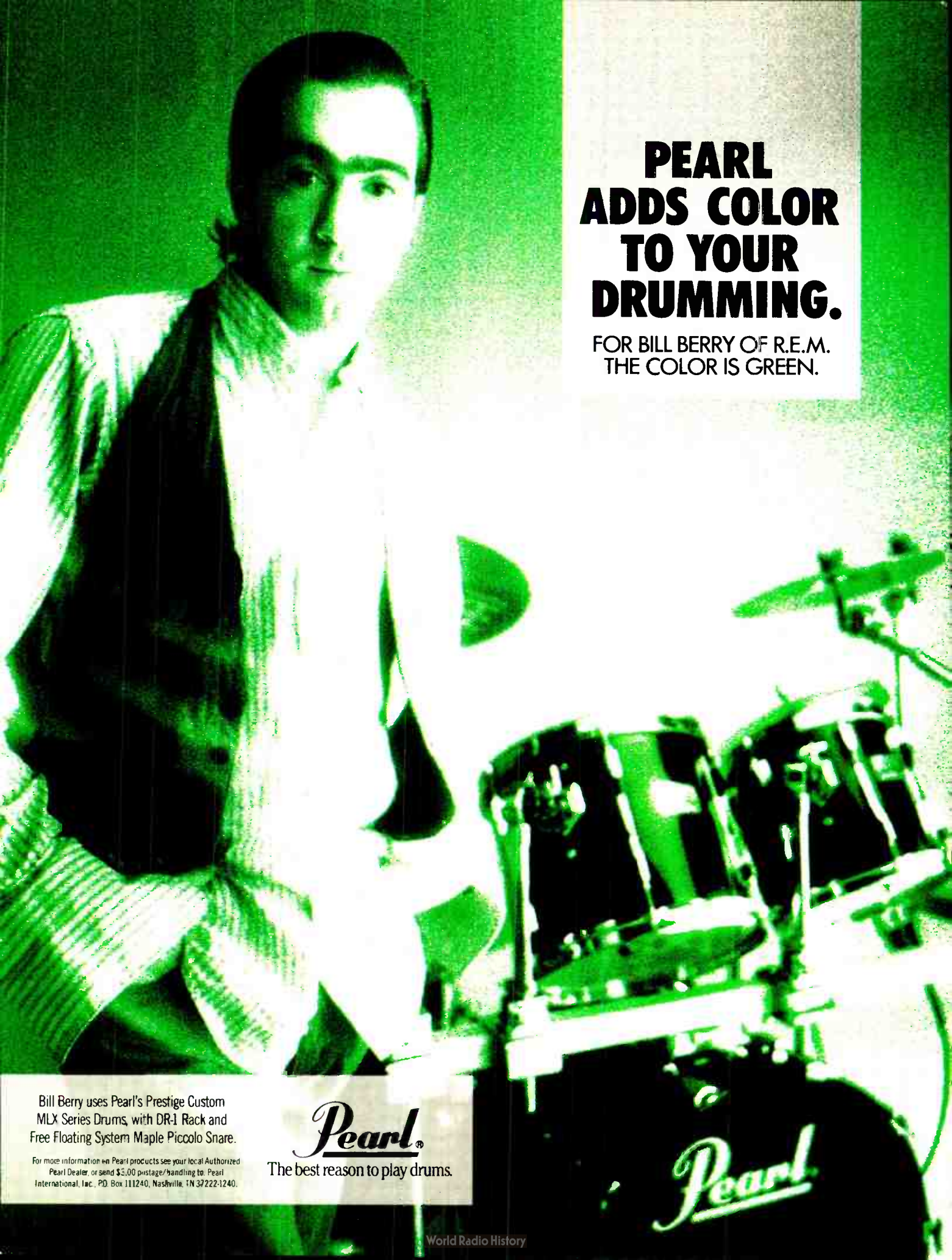
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FIREWORKS

ED Crawford alternates between two Schecter Telecasters, one black, the other see-through red, both with humbucker pickups. His amps are two Hi-Watt 100-watt heads into 4x12 Mesa/Boogies, with 90-watt Celestion speakers. His one effect is an MXR Dynacomp. He uses Gibson strings and sings into a Shure SM 58 microphone, as does Mike Watt. Watt's bass of choice is a '68 Fender Telecaster, plugged into a Gallien-Krueger 800RB and NRG speaker cabinets, two 15s and two 10s. His strings are Rotosound. Demon drummer George Hurley presides over a Yamaha Tour Custom kit (plus one Roto-Tom) and his cymbals are mostly Zildjian, mixed in with a few Sabians and UFIPs. Ever since a tour in Europe, where he broke all his wooden sticks and couldn't find proper replacements, he's wielded black Aquarian plastic sticks.



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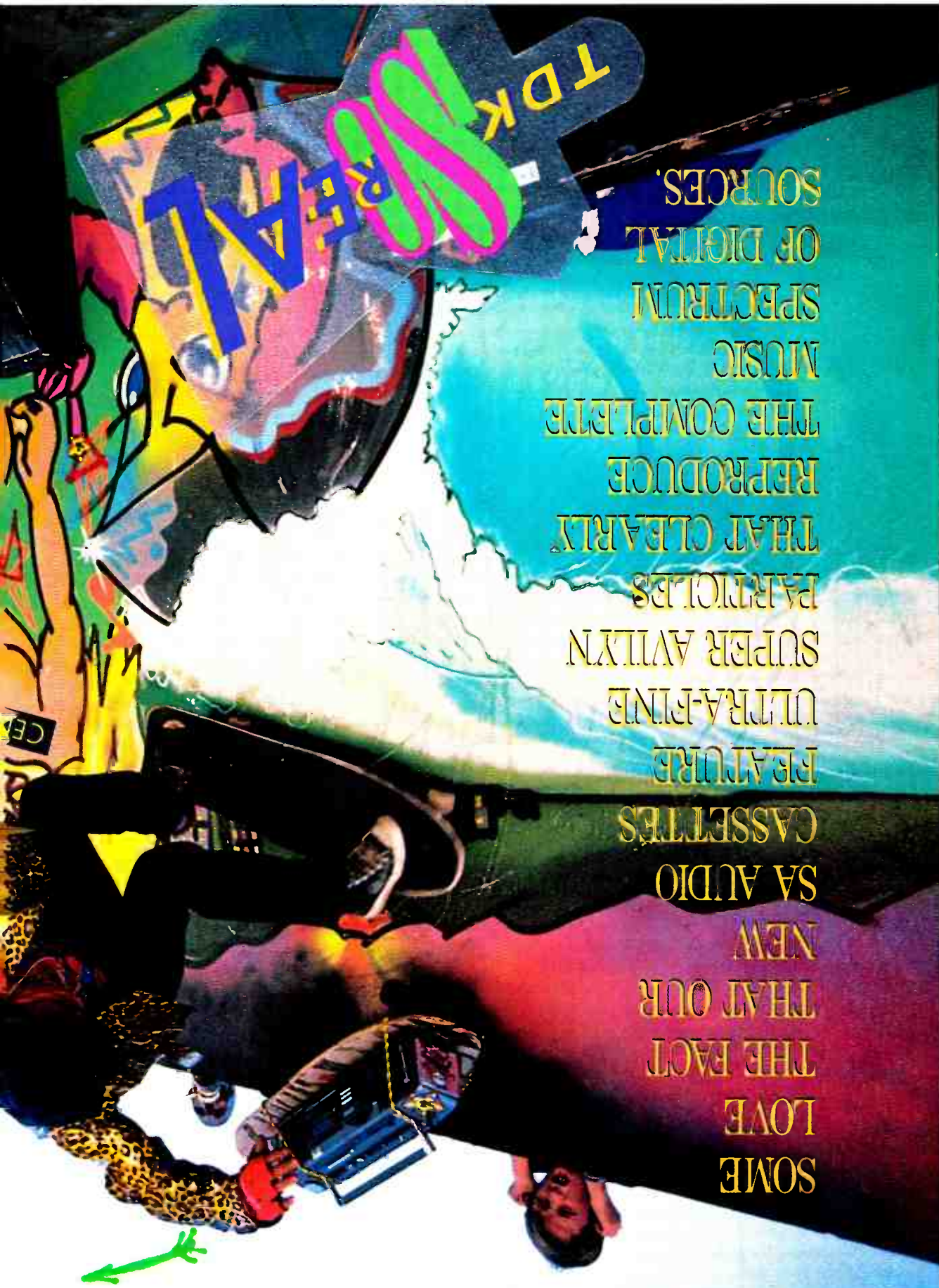
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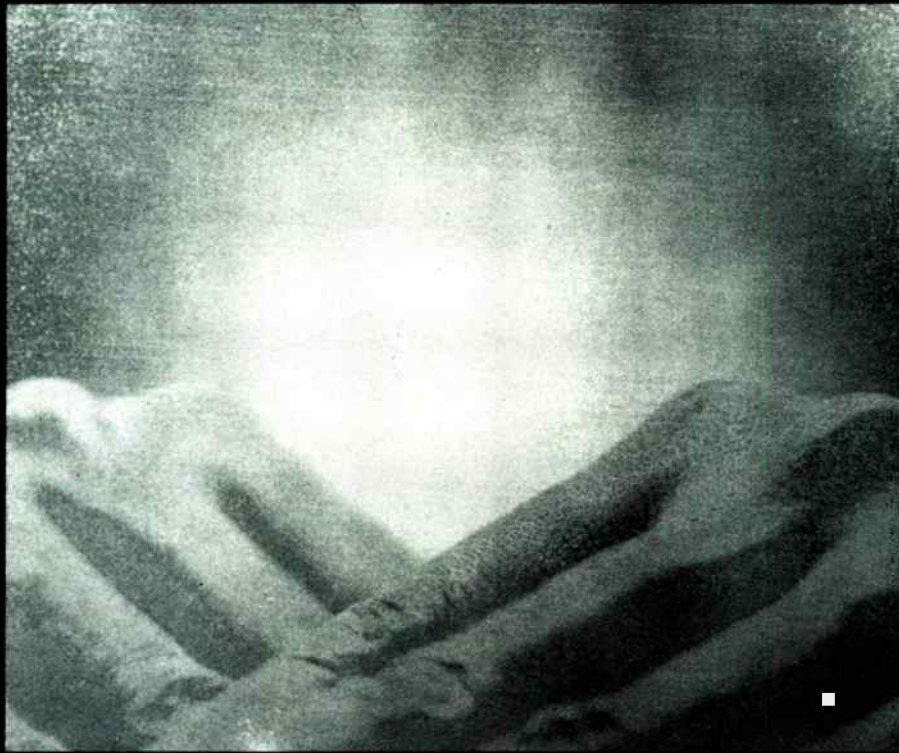


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LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III

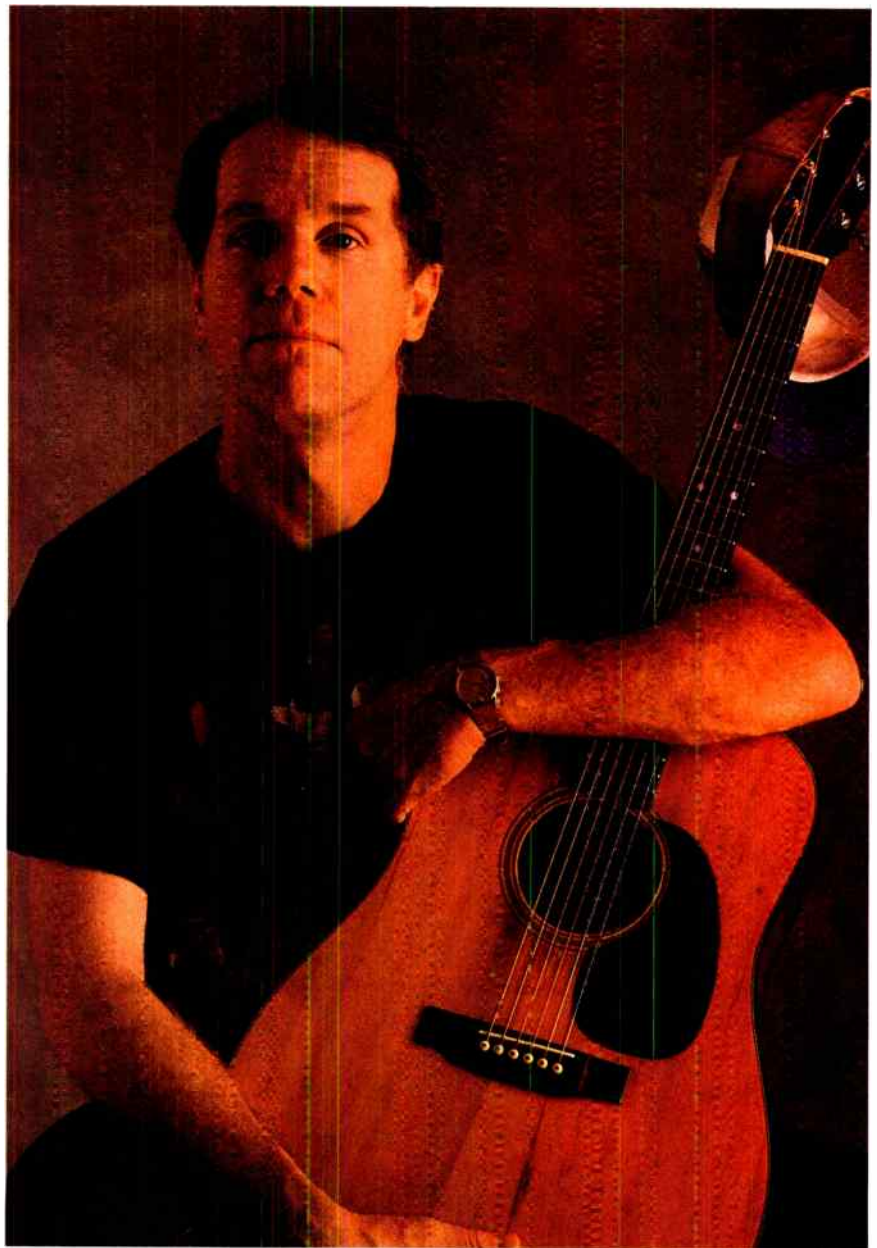
Miserable Love,
Family, & Paying
for Unnatural Acts

—
BY BILL FLANAGAN

THE BOTTOM LINE with all the songs, whether the audience is giggling at a song about dog shit, or having a few yucks about a song that's also serious, or just sitting there dealing with a song that's very serious, is as long as it's *affecting* them in one way or another, I think it's working. That is what I see my job as. It's quite clear to me now. For a while I didn't know what the hell I was doing, but people pay eight or 10 bucks and they go into a joint or they buy an album and the idea is to affect them. That's how they get their money's worth."

Loudon Wainwright is sitting in his Greenwich Village apartment, justifying his existence. The singer/songwriter mainly lives in London these days, but he's back in the States for a summer tour and back in his old New York stomping grounds for the week. Wainwright was one of the stars of the early-'70s confessional folk boom, swimming in critical acclaim while he was still a clever, callow kid. Now he's a clever, worldly, middle-aged man, and the songs he's writing put his early work to shame.

"I'm glad it isn't the other way around," Wainwright smiles, "people saying, 'I loved your first three albums and the other ones are... nice.' I'm happy with the career I have. It would be bullshitting you to say that I don't want to be more successful. I'm obsessed with success and failure; I made an album called *Fame and Wealth*. And I'm frustrated because I'm on the periphery of the music business. It would be nice to play in halls rather than bars and clubs—which is what I've been doing for 20 years. So in that way I hope things change for the better, but I'm very grateful to have this job, I love this job. I'm one of those people who got to do basically what they wanted to do and get



Frustrated but happy: "It's a great job." But frustrated.

paid for it. So I consider myself very fortunate. Although I don't enjoy flying in airplanes and sleeping in motels anymore, I still more than anything love to play for people. So, as Geoff Muldaur said, my life is a snap. It's a great job. I'm happy that people are appreciating these last couple of albums. I really reached a crisis in 1978 when Arista dropped me. The third major label to drop me. I was making these records—I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I was trying to second-guess what they wanted. I had a rock band. I didn't know whether I was *The Will Rogers of Rock* or *The Old Steve Forbert* or *The Bob Dylan of Future Space*—I'd just bought the whole thing. Like everybody starting out, there'd been a big trumpet fanfare at the beginning saying, 'This guy is going to be IT.'

And I just wound up at the end of the '70s in a heap. I'd left my manager, my agent, I went to California and then on to England. In 1980 I had to start again, with a live record. Totally stripped down, voice and guitar. And slowly, through this decade, I've made five albums just trying to somehow figure out how to do work that I feel good about that is related to something real."

Getting booted out of the majors may have been bad for Wainwright's blood pressure, but in the long run it was great for his art. He signed to independent labels (Radar and Demon in England, Rounder in the U.S.) and started making records to please himself. He achieved a creative breakthrough with 1985's *I'm Alright*, which he co-produced with Richard Thompson. That album mixed

songs about the joys and horrors of domestic life with meditations—some funny, some poignant—on facing up to never achieving your dreams. Although the album was often hilarious, Wainwright never went for the cheap jokes or self-satisfied cleverness of his juvenilia; the new songs drew blood. Wainwright and Thompson maintained that high level of accomplishment on *More Love Songs* (1986), which added to Loudon's usual topics the new theme of the expatriate, the lonely American semi-star living in London.

This summer Wainwright has released *Therapy*. It, too, is on an independent

record label (Silvertone), but one distributed by a major (RCA). That means Loudon's got the best of both worlds: small-label freedom and big-time machinery. "The independents are great," Wainwright says. "I had three strikes—Atlantic, CBS and Arista. I was playing ball in Japan. But Rounder or Demon say, 'You're a worthwhile artist. We can't give you a lot of money. Here's the money, make the record.' No mention of hit singles, no mention of units sold—no mention of the stuff that made me crazy. That was a great freedom for me. I'm really grateful."

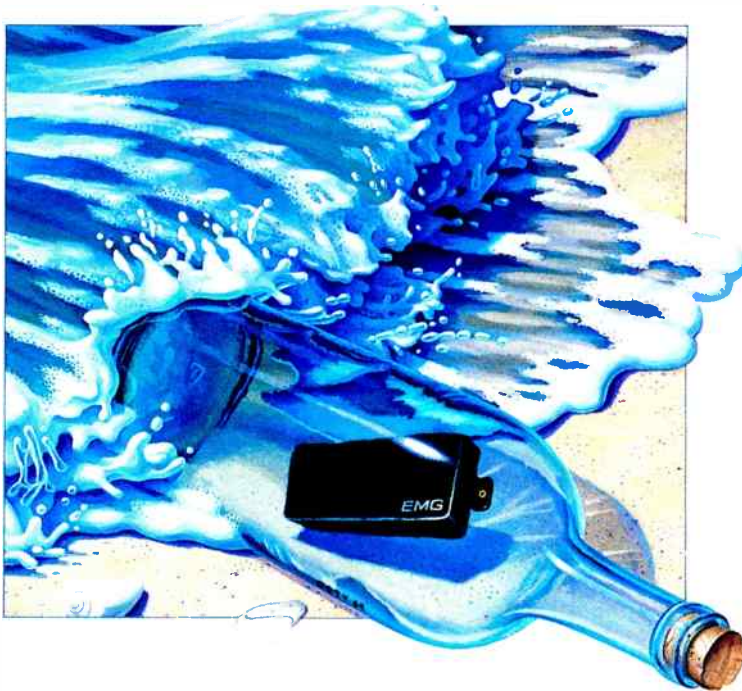
In England Jake Riviera's Edsel Rec-

ords has just re-released Wainwright's first five albums, the entire Atlantic and CBS output. Unfortunately, America's strict new import laws make it tough to get them in the U.S. (One of the great ironies of protectionism is that American audiences are deprived of recordings by American artists that foreign labels support.) As for the Arista era, Loudon says those records will reappear "after my plane crash."

Onstage Wainwright is still a hammy extrovert, making faces as he sings, lifting one leg in the air, sticking out his tongue and then—unexpectedly—opening his veins for the audience's inspection. In "Your Mother and I" he recounts telling his child that he and his wife are divorcing and "it isn't your fault." In the new "Thanksgiving" he describes—in painful detail—the black thoughts and petty jealousies that go through the heads of grown brothers and sisters when they are forced together at holiday gatherings. The song's honesty is uncomfortable. It ends with the singer going up to the guest room and falling into a dream of the siblings when they were all children and their parents were still young, lying on the front lawn together looking at the stars. "Thanksgiving" is a beautiful song, but almost too sad to enjoy. Wainwright seems to be coughing up an awful lot of blood for the sake of giving his audience their 10 dollars' worth.

"It's in my nature to write and sing these songs the way that I do," he shrugs. "The confessional comes naturally to me. People say, 'God, how can you sing that?' I'd probably feel worse if I *couldn't*. In that way they're a bit cathartic, though the songs are not written for any therapeutic reasons. I admire other songwriters who can write in different ways. As far as it taking a chunk out of me or costing me—it costs me. This is show business. Because it's an unnatural act, you pay for it, like any unnatural act. But it doesn't cost me so much because I've been so *confessional* in an evening, it costs me because I've been out there entertaining people and trying to affect them and they applaud and give me money and then I have to come back into my real life. *That's* when I pay. But that happens to a tap dancer, that's an aspect of show business. And in a sense I'm part of a big brotherhood of performers.

"When I write the songs I think primarily about singing them in a live situation. I'm getting more and more comfortable with the studio—it's only taken me 12 records—but what I really like to do is play for people. So the songs are kind of designed to be performed



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in a situation like that—where lights and microphones and one with 300 or a thousand people sitting in front of him—it's a very unnatural situation. It's a show. So the songs are big, it's exaggerated. It's not real life, but it's based on my real life.

"I suppose there are areas that I protect, that I wouldn't write a song about. But I wrote a song about the color of dog shit, too. It has nothing to do with taste. As far as my own personal life, I've written a lot about very heavy, serious, personal things. In a way it's easier to sing about them onstage in front of a thousand people than it is to talk about

them to one person at a bar or a cocktail party or over dinner. Again, because it's an unnatural situation, it's a show or a record, there's a kind of safety element involved. 'It's not real—it's a show!' But it can be about something very real."

One real subject Wainwright's gone back to again and again are his ex-wives and lovers. In one song on *Therapy*, "Your Father's Car," he has the remarkable bad taste to sing about going to visit his ex-wife and noting the new stains on her futon. Loudon, do these women never call up and say, "Hey, you jerk, I gave you enough material when we were together—leave me alone!"?

"Well," Wainwright deadpans, "it's with this stuff that I generate the funds to pay the child support! I think that both of my principal wives—the women that I've had children with, who also happen to be musicians [Kate McGarrigle and Suzzy Roche]... I don't know what they think. Here's an example of a song *not* about an ex-wife: the song 'Synchronicity' on *More Love Songs*, which is about hitting on a lesbian and then finding out. I really liked it but I was worried about singing it, much less putting it on an album. Because I liked the person—even though we were not a sexual item. I decided to put it on the album—then decided I should warn her first. Well, she was delighted! And to this day is delighted. In fact, I'm going to see her this week. I think people like to have songs written about them, even if it's 'You bastard, you!'"

Sure, but given that those two principal ex-wives are themselves well-known singer/songwriters, they might be a little less tickled than most folks to be musically immortalized.

"Well, you'll have to ask them, maybe they are. I think maybe they understand that these problems I have are with women in general." Loudon gets a semi-contrite, semi-mischievous look on his face and says warmly, "Although Kate McGarrigle and Suzzy Roche are two very, very special, talented, *beautiful*," he starts chuckling, "*warm* human beings. They're also smart enough to know. And I've written songs about a lot of people that I *haven't* been married to."

Have Kate or Suzzy ever gotten you back?

"I think Suzzy has gotten me back by not writing any songs about me. I kind of wish that she had. Once I thought that Kate had written a song about me, but she informed me later that it wasn't about me at all. So I think that basically they ignore me, and that's the way they get back at me."

His sense of humor is Wainwright's umbrella. He can say something offensive—in song or conversation—and then smile with a goofy, little-boy grin that takes the sting out. "My tendency is to



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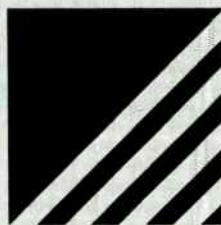
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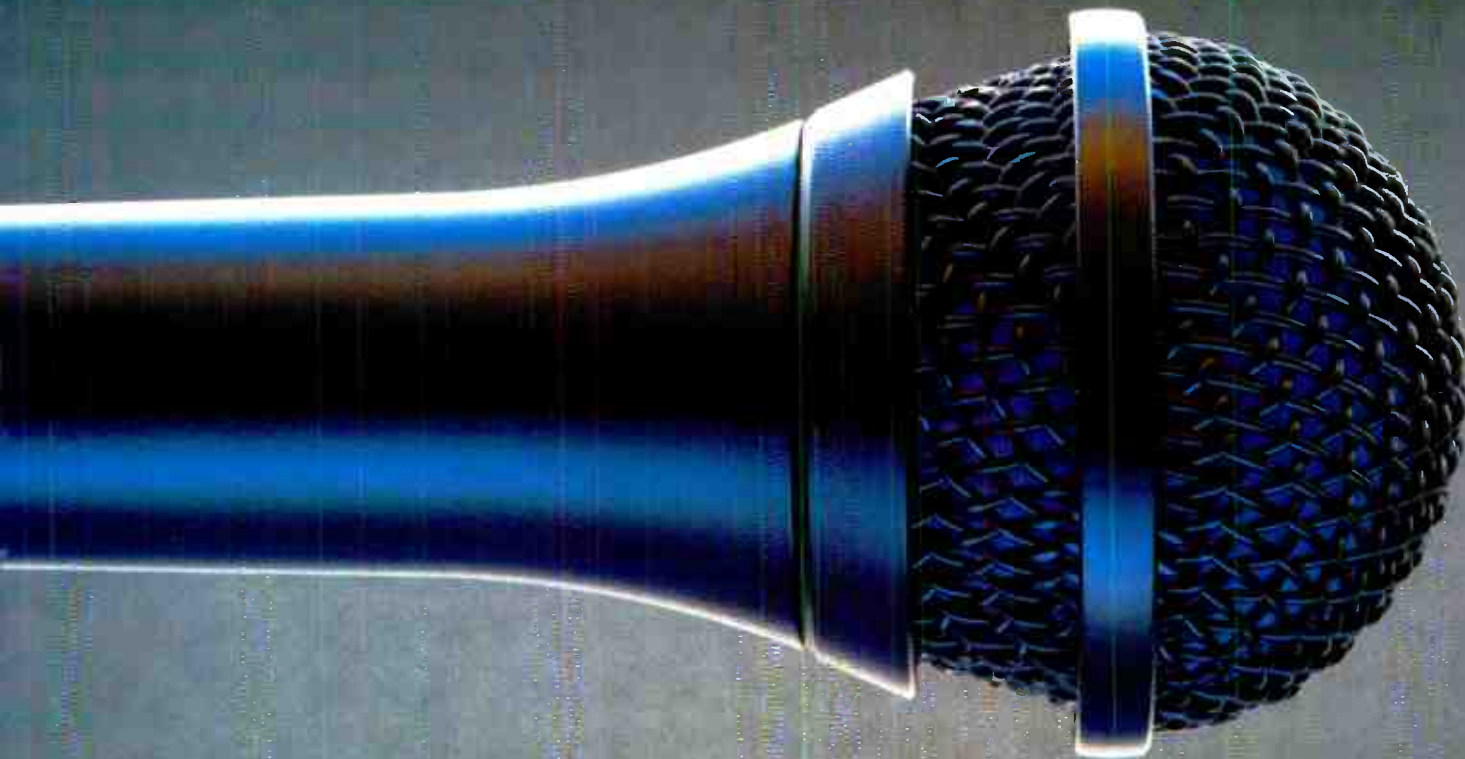
deal with things humorously," he says. "I think people who kind of know what I do think I'm a funny songwriter. Certainly some of the songs are total novelty songs; 'Dead Skunk' is a total novelty song. I love to make people laugh, I always have. When I was a kid in school I was one of the class clowns. And it's a very effective way to pull people in. 'Thanksgiving' is a *deadly* serious song, but it's got a couple of laughs in there, at least in live performance. Now I wasn't trying to get a laugh—I just wrote it and then it amused me and I realized it was funny on one level.

"But I want it to be a depressing song in a sense. I wasn't trying to lighten it up. I think it's great if people *don't* laugh at that song. There's no reason in the world why millions of people could not be affected by that song about the Thanksgiving dinner. But the problem is that they don't want to. Most people don't want to. It's why 'Dynasty' and 'Falcon Crest' are number one. Nobody wants to watch PBS, nobody wants to watch about the My Lai massacre. I didn't! I was watching a movie instead. But if people allowed themselves to, and if my friends from the radio stations forced it on them a little bit, I like to think they would be surprised, that it *would* affect them."

On his new album, Wainwright has lumped his recurring topics together. "Thanksgiving" is next to two other songs about family on side two. On side one he's lined up three songs about celebrity and the music biz. "I write about a bunch of things," he admits, "but really just a few: family, miserable love, and a few weird nonsensical things. It's kind of like painting the same picture over and over again and trying to find a new way to make it interesting. I'm not a political songwriter. I've been listening recently to some Woody Guthrie songs: *That* guy was a political songwriter, 'cause he was down there living it. See, I'm not living it. I'm living sometimes in New York and sometimes in London and dealing with the kids and the people and the career and my own little doodly life. One of the rules of writing is that you have to write about what you know about, and that's all I know about."

Luckily for Loudon, people will always have kids and careers, so he's probably assured of an audience. Sometimes, though, his most specific career songs—i.e., songs about being folksinger L. Wainwright III—become so self-referential that the snake swallows its tail. Onstage Wainwright hits the audience with "The Home Stretch," a devastating

CONTINUED ON PAGE 68



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Jeff Beck's

CHOP SHOP

After *another* four years
in the garage, the supercharged
guitarist hits the road

By Scott Isler

MUSICIAN: What assurances do we have that at the end of 1985 you won't just pack up again and go back to your cars for another three years?

BECK: None, really. Get somebody to buy the album. Then maybe I'll find some kind of identity that is feasible on video and stage. And if I get that right, maybe you'll see me in 1986. ☐

ALAS, we didn't see Jeff Beck in 1986. Or 1987. Or... but you get the idea. When we last *did* see Beck—over four years ago, in an interview whose conclusion is reprinted above—he had just released *Flash*, his second album in eight years. With clockwork consistency—you can set your leap-year calendar by him—he's now back with *Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop*, with Terry Bozzio and Tony Hymas.

Celebrities are supposed to be in the public eye. Beck doesn't work that way. He makes other "reclusive" superstars look desperately whorish. Most pop music icons, if not exactly throwing themselves at reporters, can usually be found furthering their careers in the recording studio or on the concert trail. Beck has made four albums since 1977; except for a mini-tour of Japan in '85 and a handful of benefit appearances, he hasn't hit the road since 1980.

So why do we still care about the guy, let alone even remember him? A silly question with many answers. Let's start with: the Yardbirds. This 1960s British-invasion band never seriously rivaled the Beatles or Stones in popularity. Cognoscenti know, however, that the Yardbirds begat the holy trinity of English rock guitarists, employing in turn Eric Clapton, Beck and Jimmy Page. Of the three, Beck left the largest recorded legacy; the group's songs may sound dated now, but not Beck's sizzingly subversive guitar solos.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE RAPPORT



companies. The first thing I had to do was leave home and not be around my garage too often [*chuckles*]. By cutting off that, going to New York and working with Nile Rodgers, it made me concentrate on the project every day. I got on a train, so to speak, within. I thought that'd be a quick stepping-stone to success; I'll have a smash hit album with Nile Rodgers and then I'll start doing what I'm doing now. But Nile didn't have the right stuff for me. The material was all wrong. There were a couple of good things in it: "Escape," which Jan Hammer wrote, got me a Grammy, and "People Get Ready." People remember those two and they don't remember any of the others.

I loved [Rod Stewart's vocal on "People Get Ready"], I thought it was brilliant. That was done in about two hours; it was just one of those magic moments. He sings better than anybody else on that sort of stuff.

MUSICIAN: *Yet there seem to be personality differences that keep you two guys apart.*

BECK: Oh... y'can't blame him. He turned his back on my thing years ago and never looked back. If you were to measure success by popularity—and money [*laughs*—then who needs to go back and look at the days when we were driving along in the back of a van? I can understand it. He's shy of that. 'Cause no one really wants to go backwards in that sense. But he still respects me, I think. And I think any time from here on out he'll still always want to do a record or two. But he's in that little capsule floating around L.A. and not really with us [*laughs*]. It must be really difficult for a vocalist in his position to keep credibility. He's only got friends that tell him what goes on; as far as I know, he doesn't go to sleazy clubs—I mean, really sleazy clubs [*laughs*] where you find out where these kids are coming from, what they're up to.

MUSICIAN: *Do you do that?*

BECK: Yeah! I don't like going on my own 'cause you feel a bit of a twit. But Terry goes to clubs, he's a club freak.

Those were magic days [with the first Jeff Beck Group]. I just knew [Rod] had a freak voice. He is a freak; nobody can sing like that. They're just copies. He's the prototype.

MUSICIAN: *Is this new album almost all-instrumental because you figure you can't get another singer like Rod?*

BECK: Precisely. I'd love to have a singer. But what makes it special for me is the fact that I can entertain with guitars. The first time a vocalist comes in, it's a band, a normal band. No matter how good or how slightly different it may be, it just has that line-up: vocals, bass, guitar, drum. This way, it's just sounds; it's not hearing anything that's human. Find me a singer and I'll put him in the band, but they're all... I don't know. There's probably somebody out there.

MUSICIAN: *Was Flash supposed to be Jeff Beck's "commercial" album?*

BECK: That was the whole idea. I thought I'd make no bones about it. I thought that's what I have to do in order to gain confidence in the record company that I wasn't trying to sell them down the river with some strange shit [*laughs*].

MUSICIAN: *But your interviews at the time gave the impression that you were only half into it.*

BECK: Yeah, well... I had to poison myself a little bit. I didn't want to be in New York doing a commercial record; I can't pretend I did. But I should have taken stock of it and said no. At least it got me out doing something; that's one good thing about it. If I hadn't gone to New York I'd have sat around for another

few years [*laughs*].

MUSICIAN: *Ironically, that record didn't sell so well.*

BECK: That's right. And for Nile Rodgers it's probably a blot on his career. But I think he used me as a sideshow. With Madonna smoking and boiling and flames coming out everywhere, he couldn't afford to spend much time with me. I was slotted in between two Madonna singles [*laughs*]. In fact, I think she was still mixing when I was doing my first cuts. She kept coming in, saying, "How's it going with Nile? When's he gonna be free?" I said, "He *ain't* gonna be free until I'm finished! *Piss off!*"

MUSICIAN: *Are you happier blowing on instrumentals?*

BECK: Oh no, I love playing for vocalists. My whole thing with Rod was embellishing what he was doing, and being thrilled by the way he sings. It was like a ping-pong match. But it's a whole different thing since '75. I went out, and [John] McLaughlin was around, we did a double-barreled show together. It was two extremes: totally esoteric jazz-rock and this—not pop, more reasonable sort of music that I was playing. Funnily enough, people got off more on my stuff than they did on his; they could understand the comparatively simple rhythms. John's stuff was so out [*laughs*]. I mean, I loved it, but as a piece of entertainment with a sizable audience

there has to be some common ingredient that people are genuinely into and not wondering [*whispers*], "What's supposed to be happening?" A lot of girls don't understand it. They don't like screeching, million-note guitar solos. They're impressed for a few minutes; then the next song has that in it, and the next one, and the next. It's much too deep for most people.

MUSICIAN: *Weren't you supposed to have done a rockabilly album?*

BECK: I was going to do something taking rockabilly elements and twisting them into an '89 configuration, using slap-echo guitar, wild sounds—a bit like the Stray Cats but super-charged. Terry wasn't really into it. I think he wanted to go a bit more street, more up-to-date. When I was 16 I learned all those country licks and I thought people might like to hear a side of me which they hadn't ever heard. I played Terry a couple of ideas on tape and he said, "Save it for your own thing. I'm really not into that." He isn't a rockabilly drummer and you need somebody who's lived with that. We have a great section of it on "Savoy"; they let me get away with that.

MUSICIAN: *You've said you like to work fast and cheap in the studio, yet your albums always seem to take years.*

BECK: I don't know why that happened. I'll never let it happen again. I think a lot of it is being too comfortable in the studio. The place where we did *Guitar Shop* was really idyllic: right by a river, a beautiful place to be. I should have been in some crappy studio that was falling to bits and have to drive there every day. When you're a resident you flop out of bed, it's all too easy, time flies by.

MUSICIAN: *Was the material hard to pull together?*

BECK: It was, because I'm not a writer. For Tony it must have been like trying to wring blood out of a stone. 'Cause they can't do anything until I play something, unless they write it. And obviously that wasn't what they wanted to do, Terry and Tony.

We did the album ass-about-face. We should have gone into a rehearsal studio for about a month and written the stuff, or watched what we'd got already grow a bit before we went into a studio. But they gave us such a dynamite rate at the studio;

"I was in despair of what had happened to the music industry—this endless corporate cock-up of which I was no part whatsoever."

they said, "There's the two-track, here's the record button, you guys have a good time." We were going to spend some time writing in there. But we were so knocked out by the sound that we got there on tape. Leif Mases, the engineer, went out the door and he came screaming back in, saying, "Do you mind if I just hang around for a couple of hours?" We had four decent rough ideas on tape in about a day. From then on, he didn't leave: "Right, get the master 24-track going."

But we tried to run before we could walk. That's the way it goes: It was flattering to hear something back sounding really good and not listening to a 10-cent cassette recorder and going, "Oh dear, what do we do now?" It took eight months because—we were playing chess! Tony bought this fucking chess-board. We'd get up about lunchtime. About two o'clock we couldn't get into playing so we got the chess out. It became like a gent's club. After three months I said to Ernest [Chapman], my manager, "Look, this is ridiculous." "No, no, you're still well within budget." He shouldn't have said that!

Then what happened was, stuff started sounding so great to us—from nothing we had this monstrous sound going—we didn't really know what we should dub on or leave off: whether we should leave it raw as it came off our guitars and drums or whether we should layer-cake an album to fit in with what's going on today. That was a dilemma. Terry would have wanted a three-piece band to kick ass, cut as we played live, just get rid of a few glitches. But I don't see how you can make an album like that, not with today's recording methods. Too many factors go against that. If we were in the '50s we could have cut an album in a half-hour, if we'd had the right material outlined. But when you go back in a studio and you hear depressingly thin guitar sounds and the drums are kicking, you think, "Well, let's just work on the guitar rather than get Terry to go thrashing around for two days while I try to get the guitar." Maintaining the freshness is hard, too, when you keep dubbing on the same track all the time.

We needed a producer but we didn't have one. At the end of the day we had to make a three-way deal on it and agree we should have had a producer. But we couldn't find one. They all said, "What the hell am I gonna do, come down there and go, 'Yeah, that's good?'" They're too afraid. I needed a really strong guy to come in and say, "This is shit, that's great." Far as I'm concerned, you get a sounding-board. Even though it may be a little bit harsh, you're still better off at the end of the day saying, "This is definitely down to the producer." We didn't get a guy, so that was it—rather than get in deep, in big money and spend a month finding that we didn't like the guy. I was dying for somebody to come in after we'd got four or five finished things, just to see what they thought. You can't expect them to take time out to come down and then have the embarrassing task of saying, "Sorry, we don't like the looks of it." If you're going to do something as out as this is, you've gotta take that load on your own shoulders. It was all very abstract until we rounded off a few rough edges.

MUSICIAN: *You didn't mind working in Jimmy Page's studio?*

BECK: That hurt, knowing he was getting all the bread for it. When we finished the album I left me bike there, in his shed. So he got a bicycle out of it as well.

MUSICIAN: *Why don't you go back and get it?*

BECK: He's probably sold it!

MUSICIAN: *Can you explain some of Guitar Shop's song titles?*

"I went through a period of feeling, was it worth keeping up the chops? Or was it time to put the guitar away?"

BECK: We were terrible at titles. In fact, we were having a celebration dinner up the road from the studio on the last day, when we were gonna wrap up the whole thing, and nobody could think of any titles! 'Cause with instrumental stuff, there's nothing to point the way. It could be a million different titles and they would all fit. It's just selecting the right one that does something for a song. "Savoy" had that '40s-type swing, pre-rock 'n' roll. On "Big Block" we wanted something that gave this impression of size and power; "Big Block Chevy" was what we were gonna call it. Then we dropped out "Chevy." "Stand on It"—they're all hot-rod oriented. Some of the hot-rod slang is really tough, fun, slick street-sounding things. On "Two Rivers" we sat around, closed our eyes and thought, and everybody came up with this picture of a landscape with meandering rivers in it.

MUSICIAN: *How about your use of the whammy-bar on "Where Were You"?*

BECK: That's quite revolutionary for me: to play the tune using the arm. You've just gotta make sure that you've got just the right amount of up motion so that it bottoms out before you go too far. It's all in the wrist [laughs].

MUSICIAN: *It's a beautiful song.*

BECK: It sings. It's like whistling, singing. But it was difficult doing that.

On the unaccompanied first sequence

of melodies we had to get rid of [whistles melody followed by the sound of amplifier static]. It was heartbreaking. The soul was there, the performance was there, but we couldn't use it; the guitar was saying another song underneath it! We used gates and all kinds of tricks to try to get rid of that. I tried swelling every note with the volume control, which would get rid of it, but none of the lads liked it; they wanted the full-bodied note which sounded much more majestic.

MUSICIAN: *And you're going to do that live!*

BECK: Yeah, probably twice [laughs].

MUSICIAN: *The last time you surfaced for interviews, when Flash came out, you didn't seem all that interested in music.*

BECK: I wouldn't say I wasn't interested. It's in the blood, and obviously I'll never shake off what's deeply rooted. But I was in despair of what had happened to the music industry—just this hopelessness with this endless, powerful corporate cock-up that was moving along at 100 miles an hour and of which I was no part whatsoever. I just had this feeling that I was wasting my time. There was nobody really rooting for me in any powerful position. As my record company's based in New York and I live in the depths of the country in England, I just didn't feel I was even in the business.

I wouldn't say I'd given up hope of playing as such, but I need to be kicked. I mean, after 25 years' twanging I need somebody to knock on my door and help me a bit: "Come on, I've got these few nice riffs, you get out here and play these." But it doesn't happen. You've got to be the one to knock on somebody else's door, and you've got to provide them with fuel. I'm sure, now that I've said that, there'll be a lot of kids coming knocking on my door, which is great. [We've listed Jeff's home address at the end of this article, kids.—Ed.] But where I live there's nothing really to keep the fuel on the fire, so to speak—no local bands worth watching. You've just gotta wait till you hear the rumble from London that something's worth going to see, and you take your chances and go see it. It always winds up a total frustration; 'cause if the band's great you curse that you can't go back home and suddenly start something up overnight. So then it goes on another week, and another week

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MUSICIAN: *Was this feeling compounded by your experiences making Flash?*

BECK: I just lost heart after *Flash* came out—when the record company told my manager it was cut-and-dried, this is going to be a hit; whether it's going to be huge or not, it'll be a big enough hit for Jeff to concentrate on *another* album, and it'll give him that little bit of a boost. It didn't do that. And I was looking at my manager for the reasons why. I'm hopeless. I'm not blaming him for bad management on that, but I could have done with some support from somebody: either material or great players, names and addresses of people who could really do something special. But to leave me alone without anything was just fatal, 'cause I'll never do it. But now I have made an effort. I went down to Tony's place in 15-below temperatures and sat in his little room and came up with a few things. Most of those sketches we did wound up on the record. Either you put in or you get out.

I went through this period of feeling, was it worth keeping up the chops and practicing eight hours a day, or was it just time to put the guitar back in the case? Then just a few trips to America made me feel totally sick with guilt. All these kids were coming up to me saying, "Come on, when are ya gonna do another one?" That just made me do it. 'Cause I'm not an extrovert, not at all a show-off; I don't have to go out and show what I can do. I'd rather not do that at all.

I don't like touring. I used to. But I get homesick. I know that sounds a bit fairy, but the more you travel, the more you appreciate home. Whereas when you first get in a band, the first thing you want to do is check into a hotel, order room service and be rock 'n' roll! You get fed up with doing that after a few years and you start homing in on what really is important to you.

I don't have any family or anything. I have an older sister teaching English in Switzerland; I don't see her at all. She taught me everything. She's a brilliant pianist, she can ride horses and draw pictures of them—a genius, speaks five languages. Then there's me [laughs]. My mum didn't want to know about me. I think I was an unwanted one [laughs]. My sister was the apple of my dad's eye. I think my mum started to realize there was something—even though the noise was unbearable, I think she realized there was something there. But the *guitar*—when you want your son to play piano and impress all the neighbors with Rachmaninov, and all you got was Chuck Berry... [laughs].

MUSICIAN: *Were your parents eventually proud of you?*

BECK: Yeah, yeah. First TV appearance, I came over and they were waiting for me: "Ello. We were really proud of you. You came across very well!" "I hate to tell you, but it was miming." I really woke up to what a fake, cheaty sort of business it all is when the Yardbirds had "For Your Love." I thought, well at least we're going to be *playing!* "Oh no. We play the record and you just make out you're playing." I thought, God, all these people think we're really playing!

I'd just left art school—who doesn't leave art school? Eric Clapton? Never been to art school. I went to Wimbledon. The

standard there was so outrageously high it was just worthless even staying. The dedication of some of these guys. I thought, a couple of years, I'll learn to paint and make a living at it. But you saw people from previous years who'd left and they were coming back in rags, still couldn't get a job. I was completely cast aside by all the teachers as a complete failure. I was just nothing more than a banjo-twanger. Within a year I'd made more money and got more recognition doing that—one of these days I'd like to go back and say, "Hey! Good job I didn't listen to you, isn't it?"

MUSICIAN: *So are you back to practicing?*

BECK: I've been nibbling, two hours a day. Frustrating, though, when you've got just your guitar and your amp. I've heard myself play, I don't want to hear it anymore! [laughs] I moved my stuff from the country up into London and I promised myself that every time it rained or was icy or shitty weather outside I'd go in and play. But it didn't last. I just *need* live drums to get off. I can't bear pressing buttons anymore; I've swept that aside. It can be so depressing that you come out feeling worse than if you hadn't gone in.

MUSICIAN: *You often talk about music in terms of anger—pounding the guitar, for example. Is this all just a substitute for something else?*

BECK: Probably. Being vegetarian slows you, stops the animal aggression a bit. But it also opens up another door, of self-control. You can accept a lot more criticism without losing your temper. When I ate meat I was much more aggressive. But of course that was 20 years ago. I remember after about eight months of not eating meat I found I went more for the throat on the guitar than other people's throats [laughs].

MUSICIAN: *Are you your own worst critic?*

BECK: Terrible. I'm dreadful. In fact, if I could just stop being that, I might get somewhere. I destroy what I create. And then sometimes the cropped-off stuff would have been better left complete, even with the mistakes and all, rather than try to get it all nicely rounded out. I'm a little bit in awe of Tony; I find it difficult to play freely because he's so fine. It must be murder for



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SHOP TALK

JEFF Beck didn't give guitar shops much business for the recording of his new *Guitar Shop* album. He played practically everything on either a Fender Stratocaster or Telecaster. The Strat is a 1962 body with a later neck on it, given to Beck by Seymour Duncan; Duncan pickups, of course. The Tele is an unaltered 1954 model Beck bought in '81: "Seven hundred bucks—I couldn't care less," the guitarist states. "I picked it up and it felt like I got my old friend back again." The only other guitar used was a Gretsch Country Gentleman on "Savoy," Beck's tribute to Gene Vincent's original lead guitarist Cliff Gallup. When it comes to strings, Beck's a Rotosound man, and lots of them. "I go through so many now. 'Cause the way I play, using the arm for playing tunes, completely trashes the strings. In a half-hour you can go through a set." Special effects? "I've stayed away from them. All I've got is a ProCo Rat distortion pedal, and the rest is done with fingers." While rehearsing in July, however, Beck also had his Strat going through a Boss Digital Delay DD-3 pedal. For amplification he sticks with a Fender Twin Reverb linked to a Princeton and turned up "almost full. If you pulled one or the other amps out, the sound would disappear; it needs both of them. I've tried a new Marshall preamp unit but I wasn't

comfortable with it. We went through a load of outboard studio effects but it just doesn't suit my style. I like to have the note pure as it can be and rely on the playing to put the message across. I don't really take much pleasure in listening back to sound effects—unless they're *devastating*."

On keyboards, **Tony Hymas** plays a Roland D-50, Yamaha KX88 and Ensoniq VFX. He also uses an Oberheim S-900 module, "a lot of homemade samples" and an Emulator. **Terry Bozzio's** drum kit is a Remo Encore set, with 8", 10", 12", 14" and 16" toms; two 22" bass drums; and a 5½x14" snare, sometimes replaced by a piccolo or 8" snare. Cymbals are mainly Paiste Colorsound; Bozzio likes to double them, putting Chinas on top of other cymbals for a "trashy white-noise sound." His four high-hats include spokes, normal, two Rude splashes put together and a closed 14" pair on a tree with a double China below and a thin cup chime on top. (He also likes cup chimes and bell cymbals.) A Paiste Sound Creation gong is mounted on a Bozzio-designed three-point stand which Drum Workshop will be marketing. "I also have a tambourine which got lost in the carnage." Sticks are his own Pro-Marks. *Guitar Shop's* title track is the only one using electronic percussion: a Roland Octapad through an Emulator. "The rest is all acoustic drums."

him to listen to me making mistakes [laughs]. But I've always thought it's better to have people miles better than you in the band; it keeps you up. I couldn't play with a guy that was so-so.

MUSICIAN: *Can you see doing another album with Terry?*

BECK: I hope so. It'd be great for them if this album and tour do really well. We'll be flying. We'll get a second wind and they'll come in with some material; we'll have a proper band then. But there's as good a blueprint as I could provide. It ain't for the want of trying. ♪

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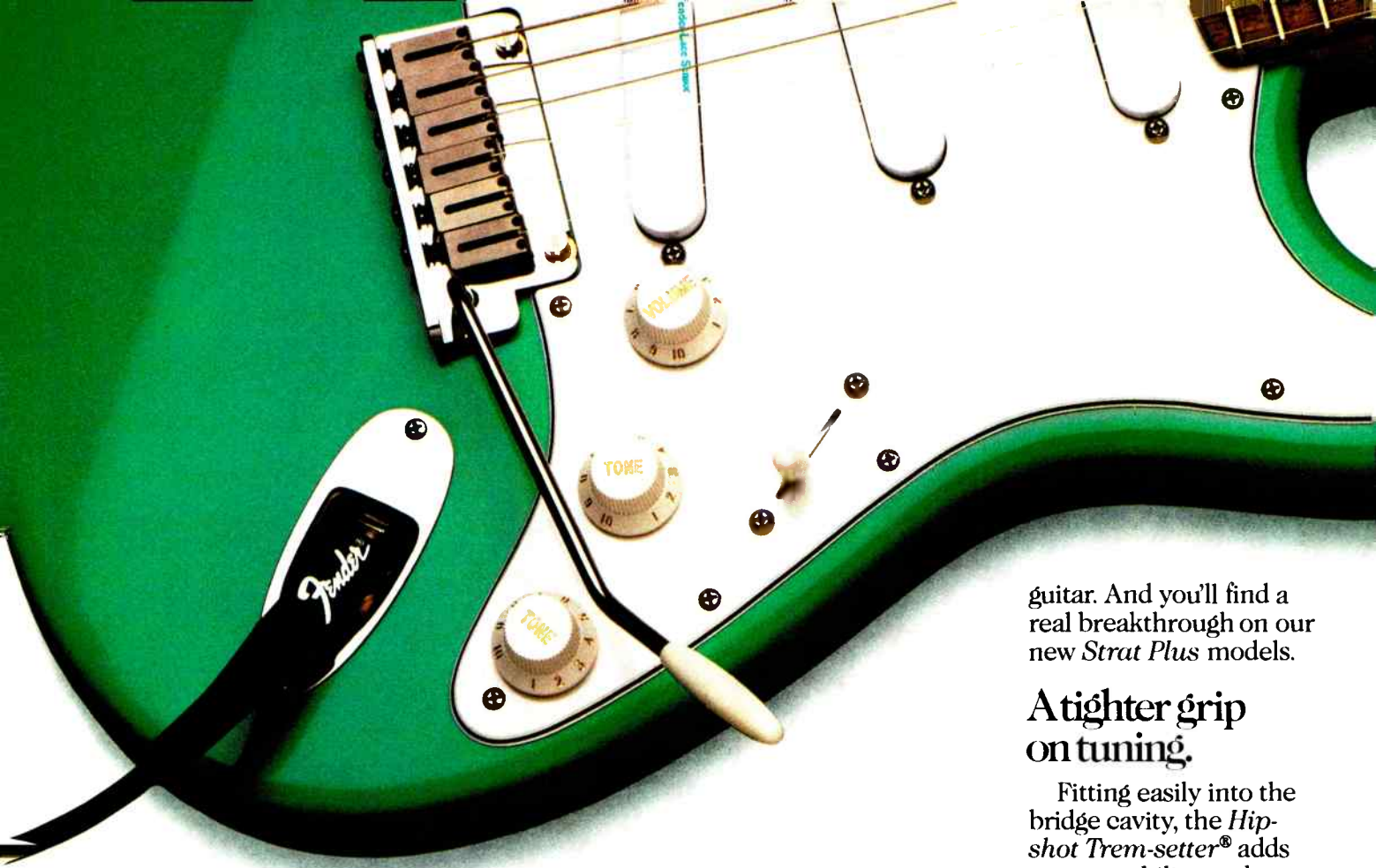
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HEAVEN KNOWS *Johnny Marr's* NOT MISERABLE NOW

The Smiths guitarist finds happiness after five years of fame

By Johnny Marr with Scott Isler

7

YEARS AGO, inspired by a TV program on rock 'n' roll songwriting partners Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, a teenaged Johnny Marr introduced himself to one Stephen Patrick Morrissey, whose flair for lyrics Marr had heard about: "I knocked on his door and said, 'I know who you are, I've got some songs and do you wanna write for me group?'"

The resulting band, the Smiths, went on to make British pop-music history. From 1983 through 1987 they released 17 singles, half of them going Top 20. Morrissey's lyrics, reeling with self-doubt and confusion, went right to the heart of the Smiths' predominantly teenaged audience; Marr's crisp musical settings and sparkling arpeggios made the usually bitter messages easy to take.

But for Marr, realizing his dream of being a pop star also left a bitter aftertaste. In August 1987—and to Morrissey's claimed surprise—Marr announced he was leaving the Smiths, effectively ending the band. By then Marr had already played on recording sessions for Bryan Ferry; subsequently he hooked up with Talking Heads, Chrissie Hynde's Pretenders and Paul McCartney. Mick Jagger and David Bowie have checked him out. The news spread fast: Marr was hot.

His current alliance, though, is not with a superstar but with his friend Matt Johnson, slightly better known under his group alias of the The. On the aptly titled *Mind Bomb* album, Marr runs through a dynamic range as broad as Johnson's cosmic thematic concerns. The guitarist once famed for his filigreed fret-work now boasts that on *Mind Bomb*'s "The Violence of Truth" he came up with "the best riff Jimmy Page never played."

Marr's other ongoing project is collaborating with New Order's Bernard Sumner on a Sumner solo album. One track was written with Pet Shop Boys Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe. Strange company for the Smiths' guitarist? That's the idea. "I wouldn't like to be painted as Mr. Rock 'n' Roll Guitar Purist," Marr

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW AND STEWART DOUGLAS





maintains. "This turns people's perceptions of what I do on its head."

In conversation Marr comes across as earnest and intense. He's **slow of complexion, speaks in staccato, and chain-smokes. For all his accomplishments, he recently turned 25. For this interview he spoke almost non-stop for three hours in a New York hotel room— candidly, with neither false modesty nor pretense. He's not as humorless as he may sound here, but when it comes to music, Marr doesn't kid around. "Arrogant swine"? No, just someone who knows what he wants. As well-known as he already is, Marr is bound to be heard from for a long time to come. Meet a new kind of guitar hero.**

IT SOUNDS CORNY, but there was never really a time when I didn't have a guitar. I come from a large Irish family who moved to Manchester. My folks like country music. That could put you off any kind of music, if your parents are into it. But as we got older that became our only common ground. The most touching moment of my childhood, where my father was concerned, was when he gave me an Emmylou Harris album. My old man had nothing to do with me until I was famous. Which I swore, before I was famous, I'd never forgive him for. I was just really glad he was proud of something. Probably if I didn't have that ongoing battle with my father I would never have had the desire to prove myself.

In the early '60s my parents and their mothers and sisters—about five families in all—all moved within two streets of each other in Manchester. They were all really young; my parents were like 17 when I was born. So there were always parties, and I was given musical instruments. The first was a toy harmonica, then plastic guitars. Each Christmas I'd try to get a better one. I got a paper route and saved up until I could buy an electric, which was an old three-quarter-size Strat-shaped Vox. Marc Bolan was my first real influence. Music was my passion; I got a lot of stick for taking music so seriously. As each year passed in school I got more and more serious about being a musician. That was my whole identity, from start to finish.

The luckiest move of my life was from the north side of Manchester, which is quite poor, to a better part of town, south Manchester. That's when I was introduced to other guys who were playing. But it was unusual, because of the school I went to and because of my background, to take myself so seriously. I was aware of people calling me an arrogant swine behind my back. But I fought it. As I got older I went through a period of wearing earrings in school and dyeing my hair.

When I was 10 or 11 I'd buy a single every week: T. Rex or Sweet or Gary Glitter... Roxy Music, David Bowie. I'd wait all week to buy a record, and when I'd bought it I'd play it and play it and play it—play the bits I liked and try to work it out.

It was impossible for me to go to new-wave gigs: I just couldn't get in 'cause I was too young. The timing was unfortunate 'cause I'd started getting into playing properly, stringing chords together and writing songs. I regressed; I went back and checked out all this old stuff. I got heavily into Motown, specifically. I hung out with older guys who were really serious about playing.

I have no formal musical training. I took music as an option in

school when I was 14 or 15, but I was never really there. The first time I was ever in a recording studio was when I was supposed to be doing an exam. I was in Nick Lowe's studio with his band. We did this thing for [then-Stiff Records head] Jake Riviera that never happened; he's probably got the tapes of this awful band somewhere. Typically, I was good at art. I don't know why guitar players are like that—maybe because they're lazy and not that intellectual.

I'd been starting all kinds of groups since I was 12. I was always the one to instigate it; I was fairly boisterous. I'd get a band together and we'd stay together a couple of months and rehearse once a week but we never had any songs. My song-writing education was born out of the necessity to play over something. It was all for fun but I was taking it seriously.

The combination of events making the Smiths was just perfect. I didn't have a group together, I didn't feel any empathy with any of my friends because I took things so seriously. I'd left school. It really worked from the word go. Morrissey was really serious about getting in a group. Andy [Rourke, Smiths bassist] I met at school. I was wearing a Neil Young *Tonight's the Night* badge and he came up to me and said, "I'm really into Neil Young." Andy got me heavily into West Coast American music. I know all Neil Young's stuff inside out.

With the Smiths, I'd give Morrissey a cassette of music for lyrics—and I was constantly surprised and pleased. That was one of the joys of working with him. He was so unorthodox and he really had his own style. I really believe he's one of the best lyricists there's been. I don't think anyone's got his wit or insight or originality or obsession or overall dedication.

We were really sure of ourselves and confident we were gonna do some good stuff. The idea was to be writers first and foremost rather than being a gaggle of friends going out rocking around the world. The whole thing was about being writers more than performers, initially. We were very confident—confident to the point of arrogant! But if it wasn't for Joe Moss, our first manager, the Smiths wouldn't have happened. He sunk a lot of money into our early recordings. His clothes shop went on the slide because he believed in us so much.

He left the day we got on the plane to come to America the very first time: New Year's Eve 1982. He had just had a kid, and the band was getting too big. After Joe Moss we had just one managerial disaster after another. Morrissey and myself used to run the group, which in itself is a really hard task, as well as writing songs and performing. That was one of the things toward the end that just really got on top of me; I couldn't take care of all the business and the music at the same time. Up until about a year ago, managerially, my life has really been a disaster, a series of mistakes.

We were a difficult group for an American record label to be successful with because we were so intent on releasing singles. At the time it was frustrating for us. We couldn't understand why we weren't bigger; we'd just blame the whole country. We thought we could bring back the singles ethic and we were coming up against this monstrous machine which wouldn't let us do that. We weren't into making videos; we refused to come over here to do crappy things. What frus-



**he five
years of my life when
I was famous were
the most depressing
five years I can
remember.**

trated the hell out of us toward the end was that we did big gigs and had a strong following and record sales just didn't parallel our live success. I was proud of the fact that we didn't play the game but it didn't help us at all. Had we been more successful record-wise we probably would have split up even earlier.

I left the Smiths for both professional and personal reasons. Professionally, I think we worked too hard toward the end; we did too much. I burned myself out. I would never point the finger at anyone in the rest of the group and I always took the blame for anything I was unhappy with. I felt if I were to try to write another record after *Strangeways, Here We Come* it wouldn't have been anywhere near as good as anything we'd ever done. I really wanted to take a long, long break. Also I wanted to get into new stuff musically, things that were really different from what the group was about. I was starting to get back into the Isley Brothers and the Ohio Players and the Fatback Band, especially.

I got married in 1985 but I've been together with Angie since I was 15 and she was 14. My marriage is the most important thing in my life; I can't imagine a better relationship. And Angie and I completely forfeited our relationship for the group. My house was central HQ. I did everything for the band, and Angie encouraged me to do that. I was married to the group, not her, and it was one aspect of my leaving the band. I wanted to get to know my wife again. She always took second place to the group. And I don't care whether people are disappointed in me. There is no way I'm gonna sacrifice that for anything. No way. We were so happy before I got famous. I was really miserable all the time I was famous, just real fucking miserable, man. So I left. If I had come out and told everybody how really miserable it was, it would just be seen as an attack on the group. Well, it wasn't; it was just myself.

I was criticized in some quarters for getting too rock 'n' roll. But when we'd go onstage I'd feel real pressure to do a really good gig. I had to be a little bit larger than life. No one who went to those shows complained. But in order to do that, in order to face those kind of crowds, I had to get really ripped. I still played well. I would have hated myself if I would have got so drunk that I messed up and messed up the band. But physically it was really bad for me. It's a bit corny: "Yeah, we were on this tour and I had a drink problem." It was one of a million reasons for me. Andy and I used to fight a lot. I didn't want to see him killing himself with heroin.

In a nutshell, my leaving the group was really a matter of life and death. I'm thoroughly insulted that anyone could insist that it was a career move or due to egotism. I didn't know at the time that I'd be able to play with the Pretenders or Talking Heads. When I left the group I thought I was gonna have to go back to Manchester and sit under a tree. I was prepared to do that; I was happy to do that. I just couldn't carry on being in a band and unhappy.

Ending the group was really untidy and ugly. We finished a record—and I thought, if ever there was a time for us to take a break, this was it. I felt I shouldn't write for a bit; I should just get away, try to rethink this. The rest of the group couldn't accept that. So I just got out and wished them well. A lot of people don't believe that. I was really insecure about what I

did. I didn't have any confidence at all. People think it was the other way around: I thought I could be bigger than the group. That's completely untrue. I never expect to be as popular or sell as many records as Morrissey or any other singer 'cause I'm a guitar player and I'm happy doing that.

Bryan Ferry is a good example of the way things went in this period of my career, in terms of bad timing. The Smiths knew what we wanted to record; we had the songs, we went in and recorded and we wanted the record out without any messing. Other people take a lot longer. I played with Bryan Ferry while I was still in the Smiths, and I was encouraged by the rest of the band to do it. There were no problems. But by the time Bryan's record [*Bête Noire*] came out I had left the Smiths. And I was so offended about what was said about the split that I went out and promoted Bryan's record—almost thumbing my nose at my own audience. Which I'd do again if they ever put me in the same position.

After the split, the idea of doing sessions was really attractive to me 'cause I didn't want the responsibility of being in a group anymore. I didn't want to feel that dangerously obsessed. I didn't want to be hurt by three other guys again and I didn't want to hurt three other guys. Producer Steve Lillywhite approached me about playing on Talking Heads' *Naked*. The idea of going into a studio and putting my mark on a song by someone as good as David Byrne really appealed to me. I decided then that I wanted to develop what I had as a guitar player much more than a writing capacity. Sessions were a perfect way to do it.

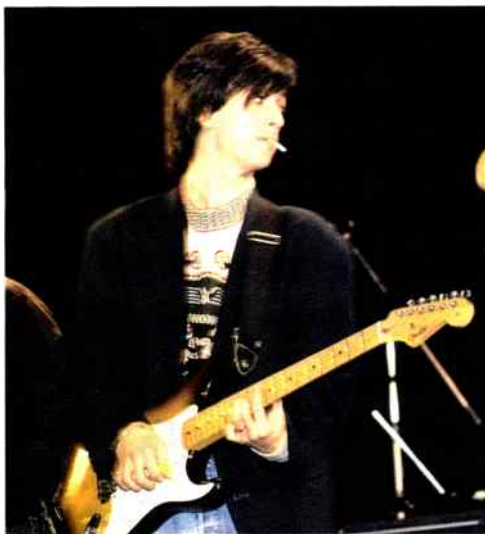
I wouldn't have played half the stuff I did on *Naked* if David Byrne hadn't pushed me in particular directions.

On "Cool Water" I tuned a whole 12-string, a Gibson 335, into a drone. I don't even know what key it was; I just tuned it and then started playing slide over it. Instead of plugging in we miked up this semi-acoustic guitar; I'd never done anything like that.

Almost the day the press split the Smiths, I got a call from Paul McCartney's management saying he was putting together one of these jam groups. The call said, "Do you wanna come down and do it?" I said yeah! And he said, "Right, do you know 'Twenty Flight Rock' and 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy'" and all these old rock 'n' roll songs—all the stuff Paul really loves, that's where he came from. I said yeah, and he said, "Well, do you know stuff like 'I Saw Her Standing There' and 'Get Back'"—he gave me a whole list of songs. I said, "Well, I'll have to ask my parents about these songs." I got a couple of albums off of them and made a tape and I went down there.

It was both one of the best days of my life and one of the most disastrous. I was so nervous, I'd never played as badly in my life. I froze, just couldn't move; I was stricken with fear. To play with Paul was incredible, something I'll tell my grandchildren, hopefully. 'Cause his enthusiasm for music is incredible. He doesn't need to do it, and when he plugs in—we played for seven hours. There was Paul, Henry Spinetti—a great drummer—myself and another guitar player. They were taping it, unfortunately!

I was writing my own stuff for a record when I got a call from Paul McGuinness, who manages the Pretenders. He told me the Pretenders had some gigs lined up supporting U2 in



"I got sick of being lumped in with this boil-in-bag indie rock."



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America, and Robbie McIntosh had left; would I do these gigs? That was an interesting invitation because I'd liked the Pretenders' early records and without doubt [late Pretenders guitarist] James Honeyman-Scott was a big influence.

I met with Chrissie and we got on really well. The gigs were fantastic. To learn 30 Pretenders songs in a few weeks was a real challenge. On a personal level, Chrissie helped me immensely with dealing with the Smiths split and dealing with the press. In many ways my relationship with Chrissie, our friendship, was far more important than the way we felt about the group—the way I felt about being in the Pretenders. That's why I didn't stay around too long. I just didn't think I was the right guy when it came to recording. It was as simple as that. We did two songs which have been released as a single, "Windows of the World" and "1969." Both were first-take, live in the studio. Chrissie's good enough to do that. Very few people can motivate a band to get it right in the first take. We went into the studio with [producer] Nick Lowe, and Nick's the kind of guy who, once he's heard the take, he knows that's it.

Two of the Pretenders had left, and that was a perfect opportunity for me to pull in this guy I had wanted to be in a band with before the Smiths split: James Eller, the bass player. So we got James, we did a few takes of each song, and we stayed with the first take of each because it was so good; we didn't even punch any vocals in. I honestly believe Chrissie is one of the last in a line: Elvis Presley, Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran, Buddy Holly, Jim Morrison, Mick Jagger, Paul McCartney, Chrissie Hynde... she's the real thing. And she's got the most naturally beautiful voice of anyone I've worked with.

We wrote around six songs together. She's in the studio now, starting to record her album, but I'm not sure what she's doing with them. We had a really good time, but then she had to make a serious record and I realized I wasn't the right guy. I wanted to do something else. I didn't know what it was then; I know what it is now.

My heart's in the The. I'm really proud to be a member. If everybody knew the whole story, they'd realize it all makes sense. 'Cause I met Matt [Johnson] in early 1982 and we really hit it off straightaway. He's from London but he came up to Manchester 'cause he'd met a friend of mine, and we became friendly. We actually played together when he was writing *Soul Mining*. He encouraged me to form the Smiths and he encouraged me to play harmonica again. I always followed what he was doing and believed in him intensely as a lyricist. I honestly believe he's the only person to come close to what Morrissey's doing in intensity and obsession. It's not as subtle as Morrissey but it's just as important to Matt. I knew his records inside-out and I'm also quite a harsh critic 'cause he's my friend. And when Matt decided to put a group together, his old mate was no longer in a group.

Matt instinctively knew that I wanted to get involved in different sounds. The last thing I wanted to do was plug in a Rickenbacker and jingle-jangle. Unfortunately, I do think I'm known for this Rickenbackeresque sound. A large part of why I left the Smiths was that I got sick of turning on the radio and hearing this boil-in-bag indie rock. Of course, it's quite

flattering to have copyists but it's such a one-dimensional kind of copy. I hated being lumped in with that. Towards the end I was thinking, "Why isn't there a young group of upstarts to come along and say, 'That band is crap; this is something new?'" That really disappointed me. All I was hearing was young bands trying to emulate us. That sounds incredibly ungrateful, but I believe in the optimism and idealism of youth. Wanting to be like another guy is a shame. I thought if no one else is gonna create this music that's gonna turn our audience on its head, I've gotta be the one to do it. That's why I went back to listening to Fatback. I buried myself in these mid-'70s black records I really liked: the Isley Brothers' "Live It Up," "That Lady"—I really love that sound.

That was one of my frustrations with what happened to the Smiths. Politically, it's a double-edged thing. I feel great that I wasn't just in a group that played. We did have some musical politics and we had some very strongly defined rules. But after five years of that you end up boxing yourself into a corner; you become so elitist that other influences just aren't allowed. And it wasn't that they weren't allowed by the rest of the group, I just think it wouldn't have been allowed by our audience, or in that framework. I really like winding people up, getting their backs up, just for a reaction! Morrissey always had that, while I was doing what I was expected to do. And that frustrated the hell out of me.

The Smiths were always supportive of what I did. It was a situation that was probably all in my own head, something I had to work out. I wanted to be incredibly radical about what I did next. I got a little afraid of what I really wanted to do, coupled with the

responsibility of forming a new group and getting obsessed again. So sessions were the obvious thing for me.

Bernard Sumner [of New Order] came to see me over a year ago and said he was doing an LP on his own. He said, "Do you wanna have some fun making a disco record?" To be involved with something that wasn't gonna be analyzed to hell was attractive to me; I wanted to do something that was almost meaningless. Because I was almost neurotic about the importance of everything the Smiths did.

My vibe is, guitar solos in the right place are fantastic, but gratuitous guitar solos are embarrassing. That was a part of the Smiths manifesto I felt really good about. I'm not into that self-important, egotistical showing off. I'm too into songs, lyrics and singers to do it. The whole thing to me smacks of spandex trousers and blond perms. I mean, I come from Manchester and that just doesn't work. What appeals to me is having a quirky style that other people don't even wanna do; it's what you wanna do. Guitarists just try to sound like each other. I've been influenced by a lot of guitar players who formulated my chord changes and riffs. But copying is really lame.

I don't wanna be like the old guys. I know it can be taken as a compliment to be compared to some of the old greats. But I'm a young guy living in 1989 and I don't think any of the old stuff relates. I'm on my own now as a guitar figure, and there's a paradox with the ethics of the lonesome guitar dudes, the fastest gun. It's immature and macho. It's really funny. I'm all for healthy competition among guitar players. But I find the

**'d never
played as badly in my
life as when I played
with Paul McCartney.**

**I was stricken
with fear.**

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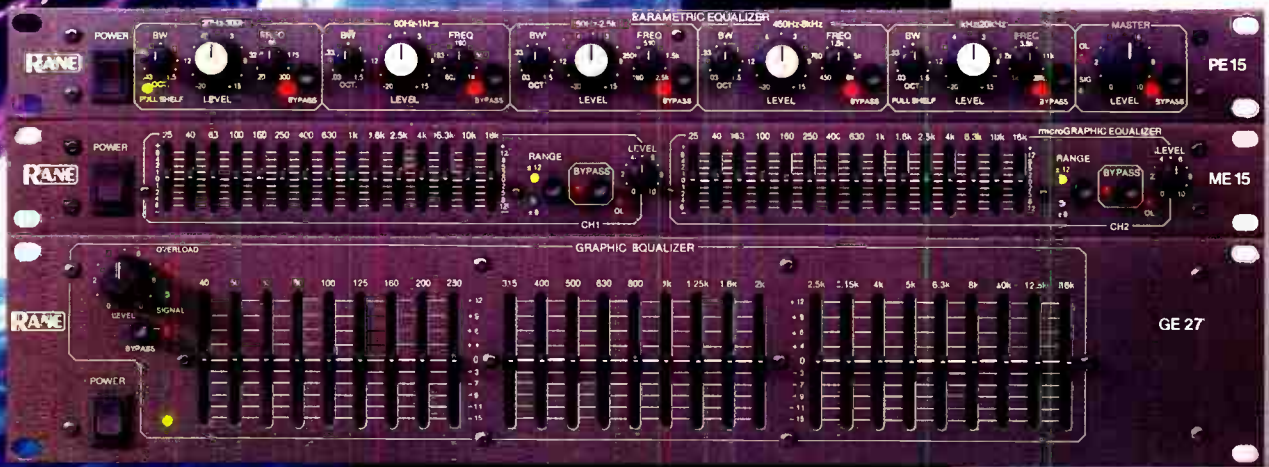


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attitude of the old greats incredibly dated. And insecure as well! It bears no relation to anybody under the age of 35 living in the '80s or '90s. I've met a couple of older guitar players—I'm not mentioning EC's name—and I found their attitude incredibly insecure. At first I didn't realize it was because I was a threat, because my ego wouldn't let myself get in that position. I find the attitude of those old rockers . . . disgusting, really. I feel really sorry for them. They don't know what's going on. I'm not interested in trying to push myself as one in a long line of guitar greats. The world just isn't like that anymore.

When I met Jeff Beck I had a really good time. But one or two of the others are really insecure about not being hip anymore. Beck's whole style of playing, his flash—I do think he's the best living white guitarist in terms of technique. But the guy can't write a song to save his life, and that's why he hasn't sold many records. Unless you've got something good to play on, you could be the greatest guitarist in the world and no one's gonna ever hear ya!

I got famous and quite wealthy very young. I think I handled it all right, but it has its problems. It's hard to deal with things happening in your life at that age;

you don't know whether it's fame doing it or excess, like taking drugs. You get past your early 20s and you start working things out, being happy with yourself. I was really a happy-go-lucky guy in my early teens, no worries. Ironically, the five years of my life when I was famous were the most depressing five years I can remember, and I never want to do it again. I've lived my life as Mr. Rock 'n' Roll. I'm glad I didn't continue to do it 'cause it's pretty shallow.

Where I came from, I was broke and happy. Working-class people who make some money have this awful fear of going back. But I had such a bloody good time that it wouldn't bother me too much. I'd go back knowing that I've left a fucking great track record, especially with the Smiths. But when I've been connected with all these other names, I say to myself, "You've done a lot of stuff." I'm really happy. Suspiciously happy. ▣

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PROFESSIONAL AUDIO

MARR'S BARRES

ON the The's *Mind Bomb* album, **Johnny Marr** brought a variety of guitars in different tunings into the studio—his usual m.o. If forced to choose, though, he'll take two: his 1959 Gibson Les Paul and a Fender Stratocaster. "They're the ultimate, really. I'll get really into Strats for a while but when you go back to playing a Gibson neck, it feels like a real guitar." Still, he speaks highly of the new stock Fender Strat used on *Mind Bomb* and also the Strat 12-string—"really bright, really zingy." (The Rickenbacker Marr used with the Smiths is currently locked away.) Strings are Ernie Ball regular Slinkies. His effects include a t.c. 2290 delay linked to a Roland GR-50 guitar synthesizer, and an Eventide Ultra-Harmonizer—"a fantastic piece of gear," Marr enthuses, "great for pitch." His wah-wah is a Cry Baby; he'll put the circuitry in an Ernie Ball pedal when The hits the road. He uses a new Mesa/Boogie Quad amp linked to a Boogie 295 power amp and Electro-Voice speakers. Under the Nils Lofgren influence, Marr plays with a thumb pick. He has "a couple" of Martin acoustic guitars, and he tried using a D-28 on *Mind Bomb*'s "Gravitate to Me." "It just sounded too rich. I ended up digging out this old Gibson J-200, which I got 'cause of the way it looked. It does exactly what you want an acoustic guitar to do on the track."

At home Marr has a new Soundcraft board, and "loads" of old keyboards, including a Roland Jupiter 8, a Prophet 600 and Roland D-50. Why? MIDI. "You plug a guitar into one of those things and you're playing stuff you didn't realize you'd ever played. To me that's a real buzz."

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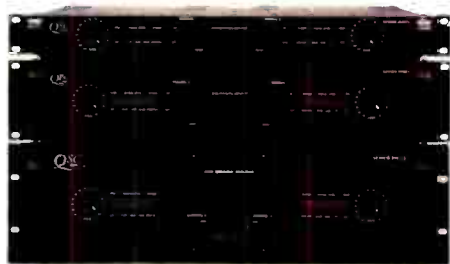
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*Laura Nyro,
queen of the '60s music scene,
vanished into the woods years ago.
Here's where she went.*

The LUSCIOUS *Life*



THERE'S HARDLY a stranger case in the rock era than Laura Nyro's. There have been many performers who said they were going to make their statement, collect their money and get out before they were thrown out, but Nyro really did it. She didn't quit for a few years and then stage a big, media-sweeping comeback. She didn't wait until she'd lost her following or her record deal and then head for the hills. She was really hot, and then she really stopped. She's pop music's J.D. Salinger.

So it's good news that she has a new album and is back on the road, and bigger news when she says, "This is not just a summer tour. We're going to go through autumn and through Christmas. I really want to do this work for a few years. Maybe 10 years, I don't know—as long as I feel very focused with it, as long as I feel the passion to sing live. What I'm doing is the same thing I did when I was a kid. It's so natural for me. I would just go out and sing. For me singing probably comes before writing, 'cause I sang first."

Nyro's in a Virginia motel room, sipping bottled water and putting her strange career in context. "From the time I could read, from six years old, I always loved poetry. I would find these little books of the poets of different countries. I just always loved it, I trusted it, I found it to be a pure expression of something that was going on. And all the music that was happening when I was a kid

By BILL FLANAGAN

Photograph by Nancy Le Vine

was, I think, *luscious* music. John Coltrane was really happening, and very late-'50s rock 'n' roll, very romantic, melodic stuff. I loved the guys' voices then, the street singers—they had beautiful voices. Then the very early-'60s R&B—there was a lot of music and poetry in life. And I think it influenced me.”

The young woman from the Bronx, in turn, influenced a whole generation of singer/songwriters. She married the poetic sensibility already brought into pop by Bob Dylan to jazzy, urban R&B. The ramifications of that marriage can be heard from Springsteen's “Jungleland” to Dire Straits' *Making Movies* to most of the songs of Rickie Lee Jones.

Nyro was 19 in 1966 when her first album, *More Than a New Discovery* (later re-named *The First Songs*), was recorded. Among the songs she wrote for it were “Stoney End” (which Barbra Streisand took to number six on the singles charts), “Wedding Bell Blues” (number one for three weeks for the Fifth Dimension), “And When I Die” (number two for Blood, Sweat & Tears, because “Wedding Bell Blues” was number one), and a couple of minor hits, “Blowing Away” (which the 5th D. took to number 21) and “He's a Runner” (which went on BS&T's album). Not bad for a teenager.

Nyro's versions of the songs were far more eccentric, far more soulful, far better than the smoothed-over covers. Imagine if Dylan never had a hit on his own, and was identified as the guy who wrote those songs for the Turtles, Manfred Mann and Sonny & Cher. There must have been visions of Dylan dancing in the heads of the big record companies who came running to Nyro's door. Clive Davis and Columbia Records emerged the winner, waving what the press reported was the biggest record contract ever—including a \$4 million advance for the young Nyro (and this in the days when \$4 million was a lot of money!).

Nyro's first album for Columbia was *Eli & the Thirteenth*

*Right now my art
very much involves the live art.
There's no baggage this time. I'm just
going out and singing, not doing something
that's expected of me. It feels spontaneous
and it's not abstract.*

Confession (1968), which produced two more big hits for the Fifth Dimension (“Stoned Soul Picnic” and “Sweet Blindness”) and a smash for Three Dog Night (“Eli's Coming”). Nyro's own vision was coming into sharp focus. She was a singer of substantial range who pushed her voice to the edges in bursts of passion. No matter how many hits she gave others, Nyro was a little too *on* for top 40 radio. *Eli* was a well made record, with sudden flights of abandon that always returned to safe landings on conventional structures. And tracks like “Stoned Soul Picnic” were full of Nyro's love for the early-'60s girl groups that were—in 1968—completely out of fashion.

Her next LP, *New York Tendaberry* (1969), was more moody, more introspective and often abandoned normal song structures. Nyro would speed up sections on the piano, slow down again, go off into a middle eight and never come back.

Some parts sounded spontaneously composed. Says Nyro today, “I was experimenting. I had all this musical energy and I was exploring writing. And song form.” She laughs. “And realities.” The Fifth Dimension got only one hit from *New York Tendaberry*, “Save the Country.” The next year Nyro returned to a more organized sound with an album called *Christmas and the Beads of Sweat*. Instead of relying on her piano and multi-tracked voices for accompaniment, she recruited musicians conversant with her influences. From acoustic jazz she picked Richard Davis, Joe Farrell and Alice Coltrane. From fusion, Cornell Dupree, Ralph McDonald and Chuck Rainey. From Muscle Shoals she recruited Roger Hawkins, Barry Beckett and Duane Allman. And from New York's white soul fraternity, the Rascals. That line-up could have produced a musical traffic jam, but Nyro's voice and vision stayed firmly in control. *Christmas and the Beads of Sweat* was a more focused album than *New York Tendaberry*, but no less accomplished or personal.

And that was about it. The next year, 1971, Nyro made an album of reconsidered girl-group oldies with Labelle—*Gonna Take a Miracle*. And then she left New York for New England and quit performing for the first time. “I probably wanted to move into a quieter phase,” she says now. “That's initially the idea. I never know how long it might last. Right now my art very much involves the live art. That fits me very well now. It feels spontaneous and it's not abstract; I have to be there at a certain time, and I get there and I have my set list, and that's it. With this tour a lot of things went wrong at the beginning. We've worked at very boomy places, my keyboard was not working when I went out, things like this. At first I would think, ‘Oh boy, we have this problem.’ But my second thought was, ‘You have a commitment.’ Now the idea is to get through this. It's been making me strong.

“Like I say, I'm doing what I did as a kid; I'm just singing. I'm going out at night and I'm singing. It's so natural for me to do that.”

What has changed to allow the singer to feel that way again?

“I'm in unity—there's no baggage this time. I'm just going out and singing. That's all. I feel a lot of vitality; it's a way of celebrating this phase of life.”

What was the baggage that had to be dropped?

“When you're doing something that's *expected* of you but you don't have a refreshing energy, and you're really not inspired to do it. Maybe you just need to get away from it and come back to it.”

That's what Nyro's always done. She reappeared briefly in the mid-'70s with two

albums—*Smile* and *Nested*—that were pleasant and light, reports from a once-burning urban soul who had found peace living in the country. She toured to promote those records, was greeted as a beloved icon and disappeared again. Nyro had a child then, a son named Gil, and quit working to raise him. In 1984 she gave Columbia a pastoral album called *Mother's Spiritual*, but she neither toured nor promoted it. Now Gil is 10 years old, big enough for Mom to go back to work. “I don't consider having a child the sole reason for stopping being on the road,” she says. “But it had an influence, and it led me into a different lifestyle, it worked with other things. Road work is a special kind of work, and takes a particular kind of energy. You have to really be up for it. It's funny, years went by and I was *very busy*.” She laughs. “Really. Part of the turning point was quitting smoking; that was a strong influence on singing

again. My voice has gotten stronger since last summer. I was really happy that I quit that addiction. For many years I didn't know if I could. So psychologically it empowered me."

Nyro reappeared with some live shows in the summer of '88. At that time she introduced a number of new songs and said she was working on a studio album to be released—along with a live record—at Christmas of '88. Neither album appeared. Nyro decided she liked the live versions of the new songs better than the studio, and told Columbia her comeback album would be *Live at the Bottom Line*, a mixture of new tunes, covers and old favorites. Columbia (who had been patient in a way Tom Scholz must envy) suggested that was a bad idea—after so many years away, Nyro needed a strong studio effort to re-establish her career. So Nyro, as hardheaded as ever, brought the live album to Cypress Records, who have just released it. Long-suffering Columbia still has the rights to her next studio LP.

"I had a couple of sessions in the studio," Nyro explains, "but my mood was for a live record: the warmth, the spontaneity. I don't feel much of that when working on a studio record unless everything goes very, very smoothly and quickly. It was very refreshing to me to just do the recording live. Just going out and singing and playing the clubs felt right. I thought, 'This is it; this is the art, then.' It's like *John Coltrane Live at the Village Vanguard*. It has a little bit of that feeling for me to work that way."

The six new Nyro songs on *Live at the Bottom Line* are strong. Asked if she's been writing a lot, she grimaces. "I have not been very disciplined lately with writing. That's something that I have to work on. Once I really get into that mode it usually starts a chain reaction and songs start coming to me. Sometimes there's other responsibilities or demands of life that pull me away. Because for me with writing one thing does lead to another—I have to sit down and work almost daily. Once it's got me, forget it. Then I'm right there. There are so many demands of life, so many things on my mind, and once that strong musical thought crosses my mind, forget it—nothing else exists."

Laura Nyro spent most of the '70s and all of the '80s living a normal life. Now, as she goes back into the music world, she finds old fans and her old celebrity waiting for her with great expectations. She may have walked away from fame, but fame has followed her.

"I really was like a babe in the woods with it," she says of her first celebrity. "I was really trying to figure out who I was and how to live, in a very teenage kind of way, which means wild and emotional. It's very different dealing with it now. I feel very focused. I feel very understanding. I feel like I do a service. I understand what my work is in relation to the audience now. It's a communication through art, it's finally reaching some *resolve*. And truth can be shared through music. For me, in the work that I do, fame can get in the way. Of course I like being respected for my work. And I do want to make a strong musical statement. The whole fame trip, though, in reality can be very shallow. I think everybody needs love and respect in their life, so that part of it I like. When I was very young everything happened so quickly for me, I hadn't really contemplated being famous. I was writing music, I was just involved in the art of it at that young age. Then, when it all happened, I did not know how to handle it. And now—I ignore it. I feel like I have a very soulful connection with my audience; it's like an old friend. I think that a lot of what I'm singing about is universal—it reflects how a lot of people feel and reflects their experiences.

I do not feel apart from my audience."

That audience's loyalty has been long-lasting and sometimes terribly intense. One must wonder if Nyro has ever regretted being so honest with her audience, putting too much blood on the tracks.



"Born a woman, not a slave."

"I should have kept my mouth shut?" Nyro laughs. She glances at the tape recorder and says, "I could say that about what I'm doing right now. I don't care. I don't care. At this point in my life I feel that I'm an artist and that what I do has to do with communications. At this point in my life I just accept it. I really do. I'm into treating myself well and appreciating the work that I do. I know that some of it has come off a little crazy, but I don't really care. Not at this point. It's not baggage to me anymore. Whatever it is, it is. I'm just into living my life and enjoying it now and realizing that writing and singing is all going through a process over the many years and reflecting different stages of life. That's how I take it now.

"I'm not into show business. I really love different kinds of art. The energy has to be right. Right now I'm completely into my work. But I wouldn't do it with half a heart. Not *this* work. I clean my house, maybe, with half a heart, but not this. I feel like I have different jobs, especially in the last several years. I

think when I became more nested I just started taking the responsibility for what was happening around me, for the home. It took me several years to actually make a very independent move."

Still, as much as the singer demands control of her life and work, reentering show business means dealing with the expectations and reactions of her audience. There are songs that the young Laura poured out and then forgot that some of her audience have been living with for years. She has to live not just with her work, but with the public's responses to it.

"That's true," she agrees, and then amends, "or as much as I want to, as much as I *choose* to. I now feel pretty much that I decide what my life is going to be about. Regardless of what kind of record I put out. Then it was just young and crazy."

NYRO IS PERFORMING at a small club called the Birchmere, a bluegrass joint in Alexandria. There are only three back-up musicians: Jimmy Vivino of Reckless Sleepers, who co-produced her new album, plays guitar, mandolin and sometimes bass. Frank Pagano plays drums. Vicki Randle plays bass, congas and percussion. Laura sits behind a small keyboard. Everybody sings. It's an intimate show by a versatile, stripped-down quartet. The only drawback is the audience, who are for the most part stiff. The club said they

weren't the regular crowd, nor nearly as nice. One regular sighed, "BMW's here tonight, usually it's pickup trucks." They never make an untoward sound, applaud generously after each tune and then sit on their hands. They are polite when Nyro sings her new material, and there are smatterings of first-line applause for old album songs, but they only really wake up when she sings her hits. They also love it at the end of the show when she sings other people's hits ("Will You Love Me Tomorrow," "I'm So Proud," "Dedicated to the One I Love"). I feel like a jerk saying this, but I don't think they know the difference; they probably figure she wrote them all. They are an *oldies* crowd, and seeing them reminds me that Nyro deserves an awful lot of credit for insisting on building her set around her new songs, refusing to sell out to the '60s nostalgia market. At the end of the show these folks leap to their feet and give her a great ovation. Not cold people, after all; just un-demonstrative.

The two shows I saw at the Bottom Line last year attracted different audiences—different from this one in that they were obviously ecstatic to see Nyro and hear her new stuff, but also quite different from each other. One night the Bottom-Line crowd seemed focused on the lyrics, key lines got the applause—and there were lots of female couples. The second night it was a more mixed crowd, sexually and racially. There were lots of the middle-aged black crowd you see at, say, a Martha Reeves show. That mixed audience applauded less for lyrics and more for key musical passages, solos and singing.

The different responses to those three concerts demonstrated Nyro's diverse strengths: First, she is a bona fide '60s legend—if she were so inclined she'd qualify for a place in Casey Kasem's pantheon or Ringo's tour bus; second, she is

the soulful singer who wrote all those Fifth Dimension hits, cut an LP with Labelle and worked with Gamble and Huff. Third, she is the proto-feminist who announced, "You were born a woman, not a slave" in 1968 (when the anti-war, black power and hippie movements were still blithely paternal and sexual liberation meant *Playboy* magazine). Since then Nyro has followed what she calls her "radical feminist bent" from lamenting male weakness to singing of the virtues of sisterly support to ignoring men altogether. By the time of *Mother's Spiritual*, Nyro combined celebrations of motherhood, sisterhood and daughterhood with nature songs of almost pantheistic rapture. Nyro's material celebrates a universe joyfully complete with women, children, animals and plants. Men aren't pictured as bad—they're not pictured at all.

"Well, you know," Nyro smiles, "I tell ya—I put a lot of energy into writing about the male/female dance. Any men who are my friends, now, I choose as human beings that I like, really get along with, and can have a decent friendship with. But that came with maturity. Now the things that I'm writing about that involve women and men are kind of *our world*. That's pretty universal. My sight turned towards a certain kind of vision and interest in the world. It just crept into the songs. The song 'Companion' says that as far as love goes, it's a warm companion that I want. When I was very young I was looking for trouble. I didn't know I was. But now I have too many important things to do; I don't want to be drained and I don't want trouble."

On *Mother's Spiritual* Nyro sounded like a disciple of Wicca, singing hosannas to Mother Nature, Hecate and Sophia, brushing off the "patriarchal great religions" and digging nature. "I am a tree worshipper," Nyro volunteers. "I really

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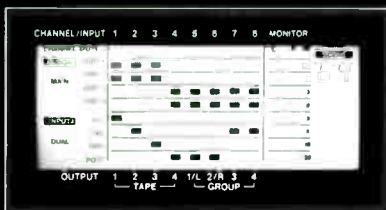
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World Radio History

am. I'm happy with the energy of the trees."

Before the Moral Majority go for their fainting powder, they might consider this a step up from the almost obsessive devil imagery in Nyro's early songs. Satan was waiting for her again and again in her '60s lyrics. Has she finally shaken the demon loose? "I think I was drawing from religions when I spoke about it," she says carefully. "For the past several years I have been drawing from religion, too, but my vision has been using the imagery of the goddess." She considers for a minute. "You

know, it's funny. I'm so with the present—or *Mother's Spiritual* because it's recent and fresher in my mind—I haven't even been aware of writing about the devil. I don't even think about it. But in my early work I seem to remember using imagery taken from religion, imagery taken from old rock 'n' roll—using the culture around me."

She looks up and says, "You're making me remember things I haven't thought about in years."

So we go back to *Mother's Spiritual* and pantheism. What a strange album to drop into the market in the middle of an 11-year silence, with no explanation or promotion. "That record almost didn't get recorded," she says. "How can I explain it? I was very much with a child and the trees and away from the worldly world. So that feeling—there was a certain mysticism, living in the country, about that. Those images crept into the music. I didn't tour at the time. Like I say, I can only do it if I'm really going to be there and take it very seriously, and at the time it just wasn't convenient for the rest of my lifestyle."

So Laura Nyro has never toured just to make money? She looks startled at the very idea. "I certainly wouldn't want to do a tour with an attitude like that. Sometimes you just have to wait. In pop music everything is real fast. Quick product. But if you look at the different arts, a sculptor, a novelist, a poet, a painter—they take a whole life. There are certain times that are very prolific, and other times when they're planting seeds. Because if you really are an artist, you *always* are an artist. You think like this. There's times when it may seem like nothing's happening, but that artist's seeds are being planted. That's the way I have experienced it. And I'm sure that I will continue in the same way." She smiles. "But I would like to use this energy for a while now." ❧

BY A CHINESE AMP

LAURA Nyro is "still getting to know" her new Korg M1 keyboard. A stickler for authentic piano sounds, she sometimes uses a Yamaha piano module. Nyro has completely recast "And When I Die" on the new album and tour, reclaiming the old song's bluesy heart from the common memory of David Clayton-Thomas' jolly oompah version. Nyro now gets a ghostly string sound, a bit like a hammered dulcimer, on that song. "The way I'm doing 'And When I Die' now is to get to the essence of the song," she says. "To the essence of what is being said and the simple musical line. I switched to a guitarish sound, but I get the sustain from the input switch. It takes a while to organize that. There's a particular sound I'm hearing that I haven't quite found yet." Nyro and her band sing through Beyer microphones.

Jimmy Vivino plays a Fender Esquire with a Danelectro pickup glued in. He also uses a white '64 Strat. He plugs into an old Fender Super Reverb. **Frank Pagano** hits a white Yamaha Recording drum kit with Zildjian cymbals. **Vicki Randle** plays LP percussion, and shores a Fender bass with Vivino. But that may change with the last-minute arrival of full-time bassist **Dave Wofford**, who just walked in the door carrying his Fender Precision Boss, Music Mon 130 head and EV 118 bottom.



FIREHOSE from page 24

A band is an avocado seed in the ground growing. It's not really the best guys—supergroups never *happen*. Solo dudes always come from bands, solo dudes never make bands. That's what was so neat about punk rock: it destroyed personalities and made bands again, for a brief period. That's a natural cycle. You've got to do that because there is something neat about a band.

"A band is like a basketball team—it's an idealistic, political thing," posits Watt, who's thanked Lakers forward James Worthy on the back cover of the last three releases. "It's something people can kind of believe in, 'cause it's greater than any kind of personal endeavor or incentive or something. It's this bigger thing. In the real world, that never happens. There's compromise, there's backstabbing. A band kind of idealizes those things that countries want to be, cities want to be, families want to be. I think bands should be in charge of their own destiny, but on the other hand, I like the idea of this nebulous idealistic basketball team thing."

Which would explain the nods to ultimate team player Worthy?

"Oh, yeah. If you ain't got a good shot, pass it," he responds, noting he sees the same type of idealism running through basketball teams and good, idealistic bands, like Firehose. "They're all things trying to get us past some of the fucking bleak realities."

Watt isn't averse to addressing some of these bleak realities in his lyrics, whether they allude to the Iran *contra*-versy, political leaders and their Bozo behavior or far more scaled-down, personal expressions, including cryptic memos to bandmates present and past. He's avidly abstract, partly because he couldn't be less interested in making clear-cut Big Statements.

"Even if you make them, that don't mean the dude is going to get it, or has to get it, or wants to get it," Watt says. "I've always tried to use leverage—use that bass as a fulcrum to leverage my views, to try to get them to think about what's up. But I'm not into breaking my back with the weight of the statement that will just roll right off their backs."

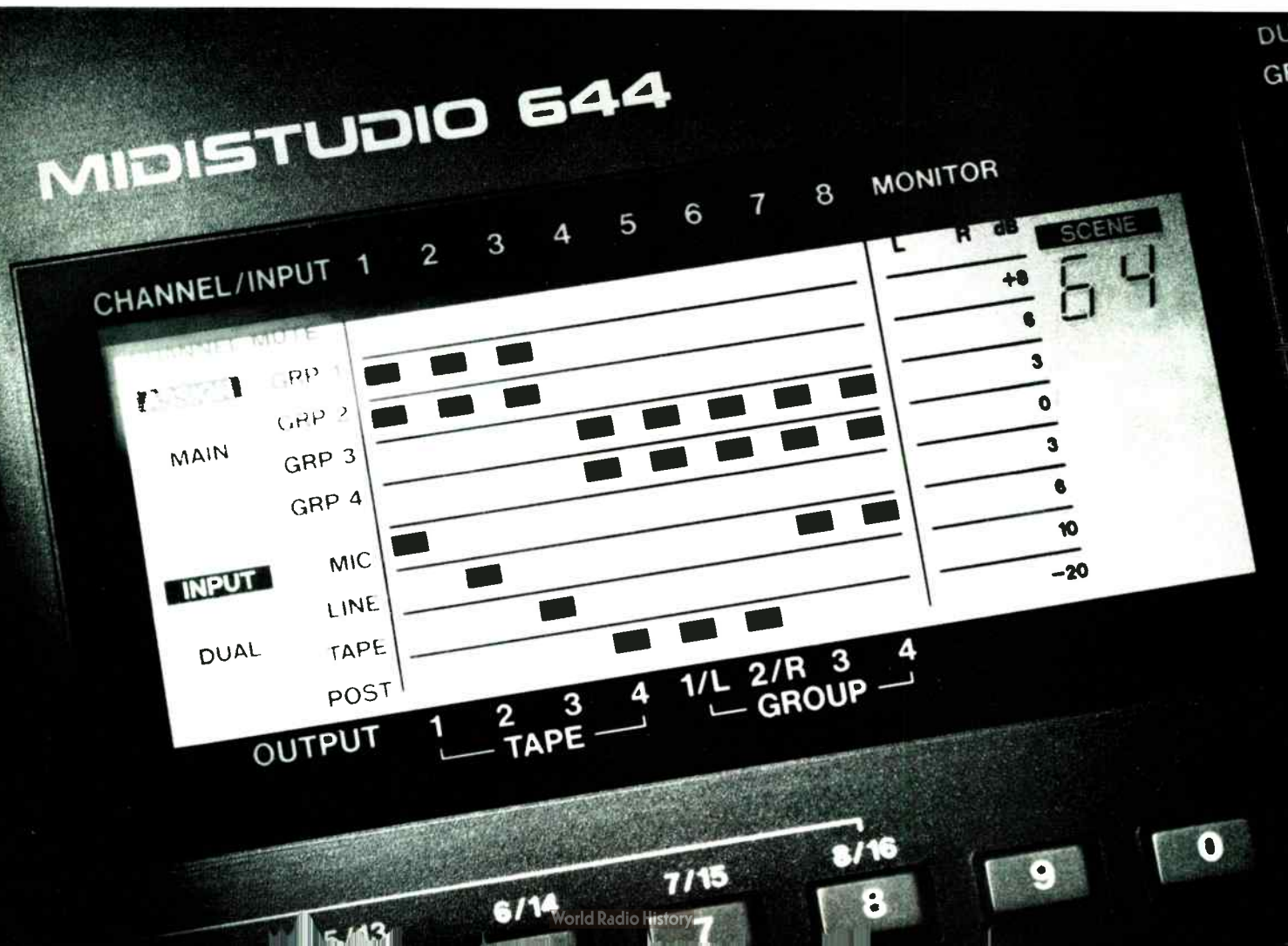
Of course, the tradeoff for his eschewing stentorian sloganeering, or just plain ol' lyrical directness, is that sometimes, the dudes (and dudettes) not only don't get it, but misunderstand it. Case in

point: "For the Singer of R.E.M.," a song on *if'n* widely interpreted as a satirical slam at Michael Stipe and Co. True, it bears a certain sonic similarity to R.E.M., but so do several other Firehose tunes—that band being one of Crawford's key influences. Moreover, Watt wrote the song at Stipe's request. "He came to a show in Athens and said, 'I'm going to come to L.A. and make [a solo] album. Will you write me a song?' I haven't had many people ask me to write a song, so I wrote one," Watt explains. The Stipe album never materialized, "so I asked Edward to do it."

Given Watt's songwriting modus operandi, whatever listeners get out of his compositions *is* right—even if it isn't exactly what he intended. Indeed, he and his band are so devoid of self-importance that there's a pervasive humility—equivalent to the customer's-always-right attitude—that surges through Firehose. "I really think," Watt says, "the power is more in the listeners than in the dudes making the sound." **M**

LOUDON from page 34

song about his own performances. "Keep lifting up your left leg and sticking



out your tongue," he sings. "There's nothing else that you can do and you're too old to die young." To a crowd who've just finished cheering the sight of the singer waving that leg and tongue, "The Home Stretch" pulls out the rug.

"Then it's tough to watch me do that, anymore," he agrees. "I once made the mistake, at the Philadelphia Folk Festival about two years ago, of opening with that song. It was a disaster, it put people off so much. I've learned I can really only do that song at the end of a set. That song can turn on you. When I wrote it I was exhausted and had been on the road for eight weeks and was in some third-rate Austrian town."

It's a little like a magician showing the audience the secret door. Did he ever hesitate to sing it?

"No, because if you watch a crowd at the Bottom Line or any joint that I play, they may seem a little loud and boisterous, but they're basically smart. They know that this is what it's about anyway. I sure don't have to say, 'It's great to be in Vegas, you people are beautiful!' In a sense, they want more of what it really is. My audience is going to accept a song like 'Thanksgiving.' They don't want the Partridge Family, otherwise they

wouldn't be there; they'd be seeing some other singer/songwriter who does do that and probably well. They know what I do, and I know it."

Wainwright has been publicly pulling another tooth with a song called "Aphrodisiac"—about a one-night stand with a young female singer/songwriter. She opens for the aging folkie and blows him off the stage. He describes the "future next big thing" as "a cross between Edith Piaf and Little Red Riding Hood," and sings that "he could see that she was ambitious underneath the waif-like look." After making "small talk about her direct box," the fading headliner takes the newcomer to bed, and closes his song with an explanation of why each wanted to sleep with the other: He was "lookin' for something he'd lost." And she? "Morbid curiosity." In concert he has dedicated the song to Tracy Chapman, Toni Childs, Michelle Shocked and Suzanne Vega. Have any of them—or for that matter any other ex-opening acts—contacted him about the tune?

Wainwright turns to his bedroom door and bellows, "GIRLS! COME ON OUT!" He snickers, then says with exaggerated modesty, "They all think it's about them and they're all delighted." **M**

RECORDS from page 98

bly soulful wail, a howl that seems to incorporate all the hurt and hope of two decades plying his trade, right up to his solo comeback, "I'm No Angel."

The Allmans certainly deserve this tribute for musical perseverance in the wake of personal tragedy. Quibbles: I'd have enjoyed hearing some of Duane's early Muscle Shoals session work with the likes of Wilson Pickett and Aretha Franklin, and maybe do without the ill-fated collaboration between Gregg Allman and Cher. All told, though, this is a loving retrospective which takes you back to those glorious pre-punk days when Duane duelled with Dickey, Butch and Jaimoe traded tribal rhythms, Berry cast the anchor and Gregg growled over the whirl of his Leslie, trying to catch the midnight rider. — **Roy Trakin**

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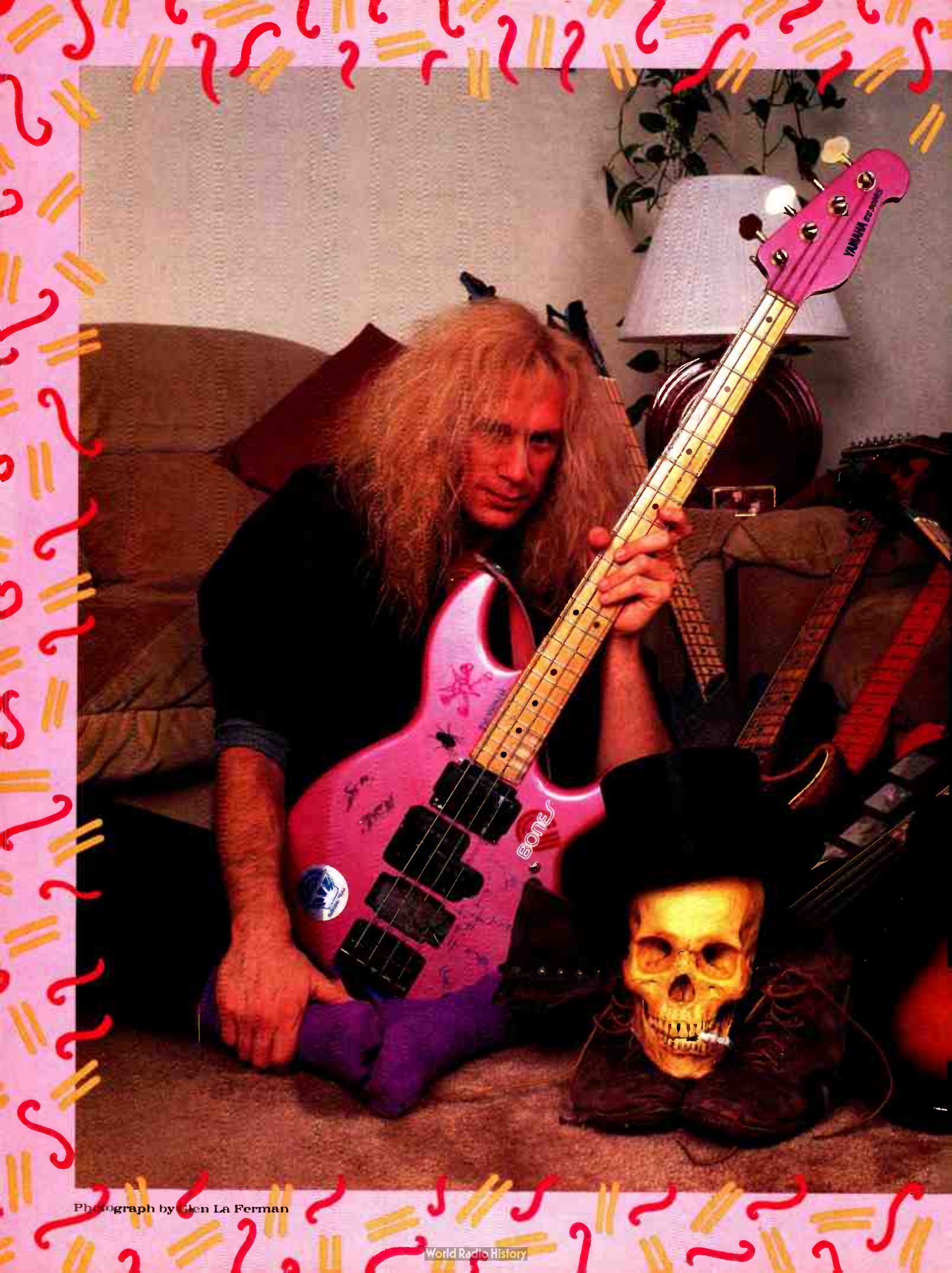
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Photograph by Glen La Ferman

Billy Sheehan Thinks Big

Hard Rock's Bass Kahuna
Keeps a Cool Head

By Ted Drozdowski

YOU KNOW, it kills me when I hear well-known people in the music business say it's a tough gig," says bassist Billy Sheehan, shim-thin and bathed in blond locks past his shoulders. "I mean, you assholes. Go die. Here's what the music business is all about." He chews a forkful of his Caesar salad and begins.

"Granted, it's hard. I spent years slugging it out, *slugging it out*, sweating my ass off. No recognition, no money, no nuthin'. Playing Stage One in Buffalo, New York, in front of 20 people, getting in a fight after the show because I boned some guy's girlfriend the week before... nothing but trouble. Every record company says no: Hi [*knocks on table*], here's a demo tape. 'No.' Hi [*knocks again*], here's another demo tape. 'No.' [*again*] 'No, we hate this one, too.' [*and again*] 'You guys suck. We hate you.'

"But once you get the spot, you're in the band, your record's on the radio and you're touring—what a vacation! Not only do you get to play music, but big companies want to give you all the best gear you've ever wanted—for free," he adds incredulously. "Not only that, but people want to put your



picture in magazines and circulate it all over the world. They write down the things you say and *print* them. You stay in nice hotels, you ride in limos. And then, people show up at your shows and buy your records and *pay* for them. And I get money for this? Holy shit, what a deal!

"Lemme tell ya, my finger is numb from signing autographs. I signed almost a thousand posters at the NAMM show in Anaheim last year and I must have cut a nerve in the tip or something. People say, 'How can you stand signing all those autographs?' I'm so glad to do it. It's the greatest thing in the world. When I was in third or fourth grade, I used to *dream* about signing autographs. I used to practice signing my name just in case I got famous."

Sheehan finally got famous in 1985, when Van Halen's displaced mouth-piece David Lee Roth came calling. Until then, he'd been a classical scholar—classics like "You Really Got Me," "Tobacco Road," "She's Not There," "Still I'm Sad," even "21st Century Schizoid Man." For 15 years he learned and practiced their magic in hard-assed, working-class rathskellers from his hometown Buffalo to downtown Burbank. It was hard work, didn't pay much, but at least he was his own boss. His father always harped about a "regular" job. His grandmother had never wanted him to touch a rock instrument. "She said to me, 'As long as I'm alive there will never be an electric guitar in this house,'" he recalls. "Sure enough she died. And with the insurance money that I got, I bought my first electric bass and amp."

In 1972 Sheehan started Talas, possibly one of the hardest-working roadhouse bands ever. By playing a minimum of five gigs a week, sometimes three a day, Talas built a cult following and a repertoire. And Sheehan, a self-tagged "strength player" with an ear for guitar bashers, built his chops accordingly. As the accent grew from covers to harder, original rock songs to outright four-barrel pummeling, Sheehan evolved into a primitive virtuoso who could spin dizzy finger vibrato, peeling harmonics, two-handed hammering and lead licks better than 'most any guitarist.

Talas made three albums (Sheehan has also cut LPs with guitarists Tony MacAlpine and Greg Howe), and Sheehan briefly toured Europe with U.F.O., navigating a trail for Talas to follow. Time passed. The band opened for Van Halen on a leg of its 1984 tour. Roth and Eddie had a tiff, and Sheehan got an offer that he couldn't refuse. He made two records with Roth, guitar Merlin Steve Vai and jazz drummer turned artillery gunner Gregg Bissonette. The first was a gusty mix of yucks and mayhem called *Eat 'Em and Smile*. And on its heels Sheehan became part of one of the most exciting shows in the arena-rock circus. And a star.

Sheehan and Roth split in 1987 after Roth's second album, *Skyscraper*, was made. Actually, Sheehan got squeezed out, and he was saddened by it. But today, at 36, he's still got the heart of a rock 'n' roll kid. He's also the leader of a new band, Mr. Big, with a new record that's named the same. The song-oriented metal/rock/pop outfit also features three young West Coasters: Paul Gilbert, the impressive 22-year-old former guitarist of Racer X; studio drummer Pat Torpey, who's toured with Robert Plant; and singer/ex-bandleader Eric Martin. But Sheehan, more through default than design, is the star.

"Truth is, I stole everything I do from people like Bach, Zappa or Paco De Lucia. If you listen to only metal, you're going to be very tunnel vision in your style."

"Back in Buffalo," he says soberly, sipping wine a few shades lighter than his red snakeskin jacket, "there were 40, 50 bands and 30 clubs playing every day. There were hundreds of players. We had Christmas parties that were packed, all musicians. But only one guy out of the whole scene made it, and that was me. Every town with a scene probably has the same thing—Pittsburgh, Dallas, Baltimore.... So what I'm saying is it's a very tough hustle, but once you have it under your, uh, uh, whatever it is you have it under, it's a breeze."

MUSICIAN: *Billy, do you really want to be a guitar player?*

SHEEHAN: Actually I am a guitarist. I do play and write on guitars. I've never been able to really translate what I do to guitar, though it's fun to play leads and it's good for my left hand to work

on dexterity that's required on guitar, which is different than the bass. The first instrument I had was my sister's guitar. Eventually I learned so much stuff on it, "Well-Respected Man." "Gloria," that kind of music, that it just became mine. But I wanted to play bass real bad, so I was always on the last four strings.

From there, the first bass player I got into was Paul Samwell-Smith of the Yardbirds. *Having a Rave-Up with the Yardbirds*, I can still mimic every note of every instrument on that record. Then the Vanilla Fudge came out, with Tim Bogert. Then it was Cream and Hendrix. He was the biggest single influence on me. Hendrix was the first concert I ever saw. He came to the auditorium in Buffalo. "Little Wing"? Holy shit. Killed me. In the second verse, the lyrics say, "When I'm sad/She comes to me." If you listen to the record he says, "When I'm sad/Sheehan comes to me." It's plain as day: "Sheehan comes to me." I was in eighth grade when I heard this. Freaked out. "Holy shit, Jimi's talkin' to me!" I also thought the Beatles sang "the one and only Billy Sheehan." That was alright, but when I finally realized Jimi wasn't really saying "Sheehan," it was a sad day.

A lot of young guys today, they say, "Ah, Yngwie [Malmsteen] can play better than Hendrix." But what they don't realize is that the day after Hendrix's first record came out, it was a different world. But as much as he was Mr. Amaz-o Guitar, Hendrix was about songs. I learned from that. Songs make or break you.

The guy who actually started me into playing, though, his name's Joe Hesse, he works with Chick Corea now [as road manager]. His house was several houses away from ours on the same block, and the only thing you could hear, always, was the bass. I always thought Joe was playing by himself until I got closer and heard the drums and guitar. I was just a little kid. I didn't know what was supposed to impress me. The guitar players had these little dinky amps, little dinky guitars, but the bass player had this huge bass with giant strings and cabinets that three guys had to carry. I figured, well, this must be the most important instrument in the band, right? Why else would these guys carry his stuff?

MUSICIAN: *What was he playing?*

SHEEHAN: "She's Not There," that whole '60s British invasion as we were being invaded. But back then, the bass lines were very active. It seems that in the last six or eight years bass

lines have turned into boring things. So much so that if you start to play a bass line that's more elaborate, people go, "Oops, lead guitar. It's lead." But if you really listen to old Motown, the Beatles, or Spooky Tooth or Humble Pie, the bass is all over the place, full time. Cream, it's everywhere. It's just that people have forgotten.

MUSICIAN: *Yet there is a guitaristic flavor to your playing: You use a lot of harmonics, hammering, and you have a top-end sound that's a lot like a guitar.*

SHEEHAN: I've played bass in three-piece bands for almost my whole life, with no rhythm guitar, so I've always had to make up for the lack of. I've always managed to have a dual amp set-up where one amp does pretty much straight bass and the other does this screaming thing on top of it which would mimic what another guitar player would do. As a matter of fact,

whenever there were double leads to be done, I'd back the bass amp down and play along with the guitar player. Talas had no keyboards, so I had to play the keyboard parts, like in that Deep Purple song "Burn." Also, getting \$100 a night, pocketing \$33 was much better than \$25.

MUSICIAN: *Other players emulated Talas in Buffalo, and it seems that for you it's remained that way.*

SHEEHAN: If that's the case I'm flattered, but it wasn't always smooth sailing. The first time I took a bass solo was in the song "Mr. Big" by Free. At the end of the night I was back in the dressing room, and there was a big ruckus in the club. I came out and a fight had just ended. My drummer said there was a big problem over the fact that I was soloing and people were there to dance all night. Back then, that's how club owners knew to rehire us, 'cause we always got people dancing. There was quite a controversy. People told me, "You can't play bass like that, it's bullshit." Even the guy who started me off playing said, "You can't play chords on bass, you just can't. It's impossible." So I did get quite a bit of resistance, though not from my band. Even now I'll still see guitar players interviewed in magazines saying, "Ugh, that Billy Sheehan shit." Sorry! It's funny 'cause just playing around with certain guitarists, who are expecting me to be soloing my ass off the whole time, they are always really surprised and say, "Hey, you're playing the root note." Of course, that's what I love to play, just honking away on the groove thing. Unfortunately because I like to do some hammer-ons, some wild stuff here and there, people think that's all I'm going to do.

MUSICIAN: *Maybe one reason you get that reaction is because you're seen as a metal player, and if you were a jazz player it would be "okay."*

SHEEHAN: Yeah, 'cause I know someone is going to make a heavy-metal bass with one E-string, frets up to the A and that's it. There's a lot of metal players that tend to do that, because it's a lead guitar world, you know. But I'm not just a heavy-metal player. Granted I love thrashing heavy metal, but I like a lot of music. I love Whitney Houston's "Greatest Love of All." It will bring tears to my eyes. Blue Rodeo, new band with a rockabilly sound, kind of Tom Petty. Great! I love Tom Petty. I love the Byrds. "Eight Miles High" was the first thing I ever bought. I love Armored Saint. King's Axe....

The funniest thing is that when I was really starting to play stuff, I would pull things from Bach, Frank Zappa, Christopher



"Songs make or break you."

Parkening or Paco De Lucia, the best guitarist on the planet as far as I'm concerned. And I would play them in the middle of this metal solo, and people would be going, "How did you ever come up with this shit?" Truth is, I stole everything. And if you listen to only metal you are going to be very tunnel vision in your style.

MUSICIAN: *You've said that your entire playing style is based on a system using three different patterns. How did you realize that?*

SHEEHAN: I was always doing finger exercises, and I was always doing them in one position. Using three notes, first string, in one position. You can play, like, an A major scale, doing all notes up the scale. I would actually start in A-flat [*sic*], because the fifth fret on the E-string is an A-flat. And you're gonna do three notes per string. So A-flat, A, B, uh... What's the next note? B-sharp?

Oh, C. Switch to whole steps: D, E, G-flat. Or G uh... Yeah, G-flat. Now you know how much I know about theory. I play it, but I don't know it. And then I'd go on to the G string and play A, C, or A, B, C-sharp again and D.

So I found out after a while that there were only three different patterns: two whole steps, a half-step and a whole step, and a whole step and a half-step, on every string. So I was able to figure out that everything I was doing was based on one of those three patterns. Once in a while I get on a harmonic line or a chromatic thing, but they're rare in actual practice. So eventually I broke down everything I did to three patterns. It helps, because you can exercise those three patterns to death, so you can play them with any finger, any position. Then when it comes down to rock 'n' roll, there isn't anything that you can't do. You just sort of coordinate them into music.

There was a long time that I did that but still had no idea what I was doing. I just played by ear, working with what sounded right. And a lot of times my ear would make mistakes, big mistakes. I had a big problem with some sharps and flats with scales. As I learned what the modes were I straightened that right out—my ear improved as my hands improved. A lot of drummers talk about hand-to-eye coordination. It's actually hand-to-eye-and-ear; you can see patterns, feel the patterns and hear the patterns.

MUSICIAN: *What kind of practice regimen do you have now?*

SHEEHAN: I practice all my patterns and finger exercises. Then I begin to play, kind of watching what I'm doing. When I get into something that's kind of neat, I make a note of it. So I'm trying to come up with a lot of new things. For example, a lot of guitarists are into sweep picking. I've come up with a bass finger-picked version of that. I've seen a lot of guitarists who are just amazing at it, but they do it in a way that's so light that they've obviously worked it out in their bedrooms. When they get up onstage I just don't hear it. The rippin' was all in the dressing room.

Bass is really a strength instrument. It really takes a lot of practiced execution to do it live. When I do my hammer-on stuff, I always put one finger behind my index finger so there are two together. I see guys who can do bass hammer-ons in ways that I couldn't even think of, but live, you can't hear anything, it's gone. Where with me live, I can do something way simpler and have it be there, and people get the impression that I know a lot more than Mr. Fancy Stuff, but in actual

fact I don't. He just doesn't understand that live thing, whereas I barely took two weeks off from 1972 to 1985.

MUSICIAN: *What about your instruments? You're not a fan of bolt-on necks, are you?*

SHEEHAN: Actually I am, of their tone and the idea that you can change a neck. But the thing I hate is that I do a lot of vibrato by pushing on the back of the neck, and a bolt-on neck will shift from side to side. So I lay my bass down on the floor, stand on it, and torque those four screws down as hard as I can. And that distorts the plane of the neck—so I've got my neck all shimmed so it doesn't move—razor blades, picks. My Fender is my bass, the first one I ever bought. My Yamaha, all my other basses, are built after the Fender.

I recorded the new record on the Yamaha, the BB3000. Way more accurate, tone is great. DiMarzio pickups on it. We used a .120 low Rotosound E-string, which is huge, and put vise grips on the headstock for extra mass because the .120 is so big that its vibration actually overwhelms the bass. Usually I use a .110. The low-E string on the bass is usually a little sloppy, so I use a D-tuner a lot.

MUSICIAN: *Have you ever used picks?*

SHEEHAN: No. I just had them made up to throw into the audience. I was jealous. All these guitar players were throwing their picks out. I couldn't throw my fingers out. People would come up and say, "Billy, could I get a pick?" And I'd say, "I don't use a pick, I play with my fingers." "Oh," and they'd look all puzzled, "I guess you're right."

MUSICIAN: *Maybe it was because of the way you use harmonics. Most guitarists get them by using the pick and the meat.*

SHEEHAN: Yeah. I do pinch harmonics with my fingernail. You can actually hear it in this wine glass, believe it or not. [*Wedges a fingernail over the glass' lip, steadies with his thumb and pinches off.*] Ping. See. Ping, ping. It works great. You get screaming, reaming harmonics out of it, but it's not with a pick.

MUSICIAN: *How did you get the inspiration for that?*

SHEEHAN: Billy Gibbons. He's the guy I got hammer-ons from, too. From "Tush" or something like that, where he'd hit the note and press it an octave higher. You see, ZZ Top opened up in Buffalo for Alice Cooper on the *Billion Dollar Babies* tour in, like, '74. That's when I got that off him. Then about '78 or '79 Van Halen came out and shattered my dreams. I thought I was the only guy that did 'em. Suddenly it was: Guess what, Bill, there's another 100,000 guys that do 'em, too. But I'm a real fan of ZZ Top. "Addicted to That Rush," the Mr. Big single, it's really "Heard It on the Ex," almost the same beat. If I can pull from them, I'm almost proud of it.

MUSICIAN: *You keep mentioning how different guitar players have touched what you do. Did working with Steve Vai in the Roth band push your playing a little further?*

SHEEHAN: Not really, 'cause my thing was pretty much established by that point. The last player before Steve that really moved me was Yngwie. Talas did a tour with Alcatraz when Yngwie was in the band, and every single night I'd go on knowing he was going to follow me, so I had to just burn, you know. I had to make it as tough an act to follow as I could. My playing did go majorly out of control as a result. I had to reel back in later.



"Bass is really a strength instrument."

If I had been playing with Steve without Dave it would have been different, I think. But Dave was a calming factor. I actually don't know how playing with Steve alone would have worked, 'cause Steve really was never a club player, never played a million copy tunes. To me, most players who do play a million copy tunes have a different approach. There's kind of a similarity. But there's nobody like Steve. He's all alone in the ozone, a unique player who will inspire a lot of players. And fortunately he's now in a band that will have a lot of commercial success, Whitesnake. But on his own, I don't know if he would have commercial success, though he would certainly have untouchable artistic success.

MUSICIAN: *I was surprised he joined Whitesnake instead of forming his own band. I thought he was ready to step out as a leader.*

SHEEHAN: I'm sure he's gonna do a solo effort as well. But I'm glad he's in Whitesnake 'cause he's also gonna get that exposure. Which is important. Musicians, if they expose themselves to broader markets and are a little eccentric or out there, as Steve is, will educate a lot of people, turn them on to things they normally wouldn't hear.

MUSICIAN: *You and Steve, as you mentioned, have completely different backgrounds. He's Berklee-trained and a master transcriber, you learned in the trenches and don't write notation. You also seem to have very different personalities.*

SHEEHAN: Yeah, Steve's a vegetarian, you know. I don't think he's ever been in a fight, whereas I've been in a couple of them myself. And I do have to have a burger once in a while, to get some meat aggression in me. Though Steve has certainly been an inspiration on my diet.

MUSICIAN: *How did Dave Roth communicate with you guys?*

SHEEHAN: Well, he was a good moderator. He's a good leader, good at being able to tell you how far to go or not to go. He was very instrumental in how far the *Smile* record went. You know, "Billy, double that line in 'Elephant Gun,'" that really weird line that me and Steve do together. That's really cool. He kind of changed musical directions for *Skyscraper*, and that wasn't the direction I was in, which is why it eventually didn't work out. But for a lot of *Eat 'Em and Smile*, the depth of the record was very much Dave. He needed Steve and I to do it, but a lot of it was his direction.

MUSICIAN: *The highlight of the Roth tour was the double solos spot you and Steve did, which evolved to about 20 minutes of metal improvisation: fast, ideas popping out all over the place, you guys pacing note-for-note.*

SHEEHAN: Yeah, it was wild. There was a lot of magic in that. We started the tour doing separate solos, and Dave had the idea to do a rock 'n' roll tractor pull. All the soloing that I did was pretty much cut from pieces I had done before, although it may have seemed off the cuff. It worked great. Unfortunately, neither of us have done it since. But I'd like to carry that kind of interplay further with Paul Gilbert. He's a pretty amazing player. I can have a hard time keeping up with him.

The stuff Steve and I did was classic for its time, but I didn't know what was going to happen with the *Skyscraper* record. When I finally got involved in the sessions and heard what was going down it was different than what I was into. Lots of room for Steve, but the bass was pretty much confined.

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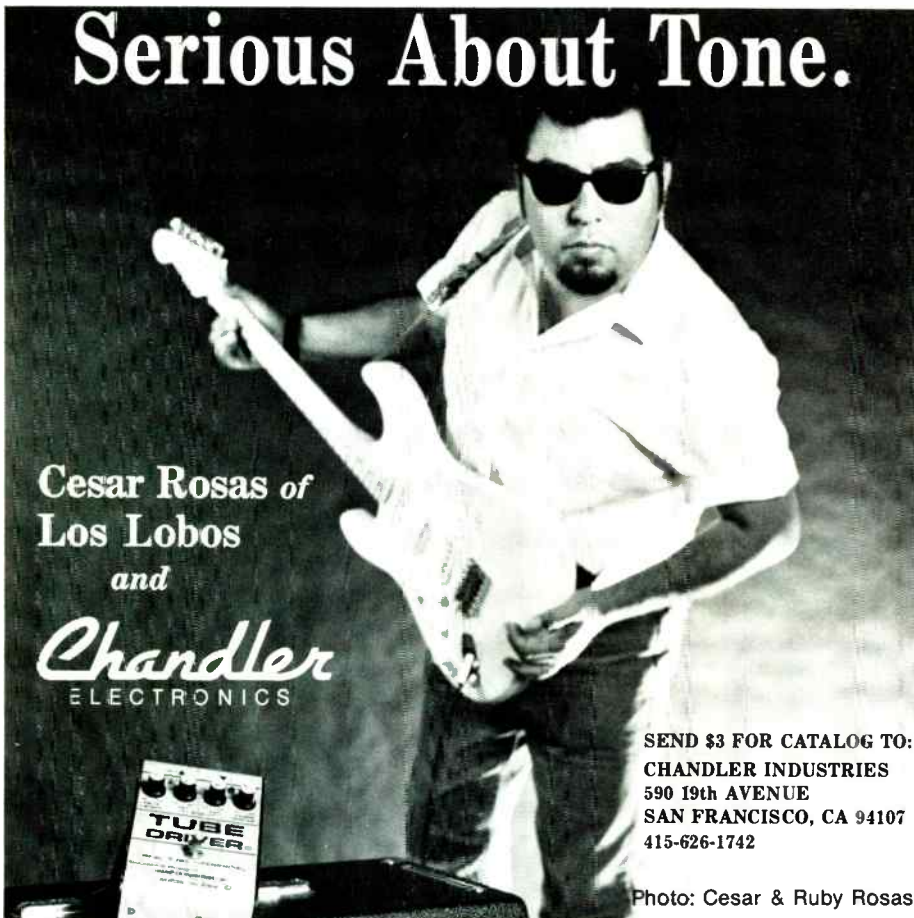
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World Radio History

MUSICIAN: *So when did you leave Roth's band?*

SHEEHAN: October 3, 1987, the day after the earthquake [in

financial... you know, my moods, everything is my playing. But fortunately Talas always had great drummers. And Gregg



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I hate to be sexist, like sex is a commodity, but I love women and I respect women, and I care very much about them. I've never abused one, and it's very important to me that they are there, because it's a big part of my life and I would be a liar to say that it wasn't. I'm not trying to justify it, but it has been a big motivational force in my life. To play in a band, initially. When I first saw the Beatles on "Ed Sullivan," the girls screaming, I said, "Hey, wait a minute; this is it!" That's exactly the inspiration. Thank God that's parlayed itself into art.

As far as tension on the road, I'm so glad that there are ladies that want to hang out with us. Because, even if we don't get laid... We don't do that just to get laid, but just to hang out with and flirt around with, just hang with people. Communication is a real tension reliever. A lot of times after a show, people never expect it, they expect limos and shit, but I just like to hang out. "Hey, how's it going, how was the show?" Or, "Do you want me to sign something? Who's your favorite band?" Just talk to me, you know. Talking to people at shows, meeting people, finding out what they're like, is worth its weight in platinum shavings. Much more than being whisked away in any fucking limousine. Those moments are much more important to me than being a fuckin' dick and getting a steak and a lobster at every hotel, alone, with room service.

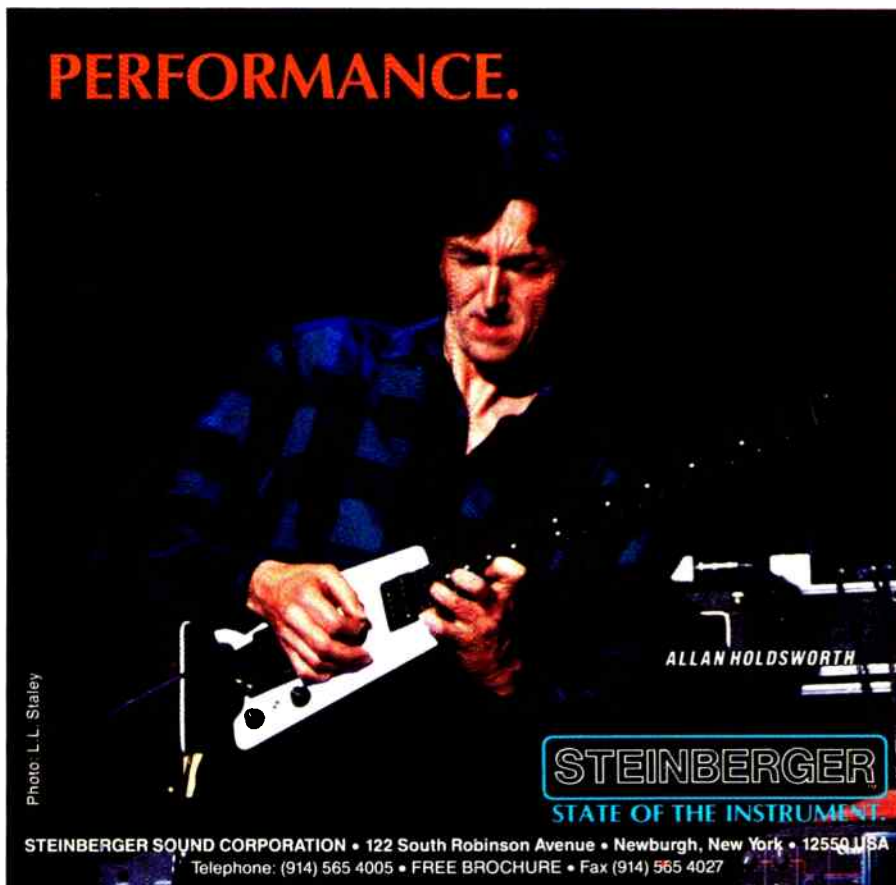
MUSICIAN: *So you're saying you want to maintain some kind of connection with your fans?*

SHEEHAN: Yeah, because I've lived off of people coming to see me play for so long. I've made all my money from people paying their \$3 at the door. If I didn't please them I would have gone broke and I couldn't have played. My fans kept me alive. ♣

TUBES from page 86

H&K introduced a new bass preamp: the Fortress. An interesting 1U rack unit with a separate foot controller, it combines tube and solid-state gain stages. The tube stage can be taken in and out of line at will, or used alone. You also get built-in, defeatable compression and six bands of EQ control, all for \$899.

Peavey is another company that has been bolstering the Tube Reawakening for a while now. And at NAMM, they premiered updated versions of their Triumph 60 and 120 Plus tube amps. Essentially they've redone the EQ on the Triumphs' two distortion channels—"crunch gain" and "ultra gain"—going to



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an active design with three bands. They've also repositioned the preamp tubes inside the cabinet to avoid nasty microphonic skirmishes with the speakers. Peavey's Bandit 12 was also in for an EQ overhaul, gaining new frequency-selection capabilities on the mid band.

But look, let's not be tube snobs here. Also blasting the deserted NAMM floor was a great new stereo, rack-mountable head from **Pearce**: the "No Tubes" people. It's called the G2r and, yes, it has the power to make otherwise intelligent humans slaver like those halfwit TV testimonial ads: "Gee, I can't *beweave* it's solid state!" The two 100W channels can be used separately; or, if you're really into brute force, they can be mono-bridged. Channel one is nominally the overdrive channel and channel two nominally clean. Both give you a three-band active EQ (with mid sweepable between 20 Hz and 6 kHz), presence, drive and master volume controls. And hey, lookin' for effects loops? How about mono ones for each channel plus a master stereo loop? For extra fun there's a 16-bit **Alesis** effects chip built in, with 16 different programs. The head alone goes for \$1295; for the proverbial few dollars more, it can be mounted in various cabinet combos.

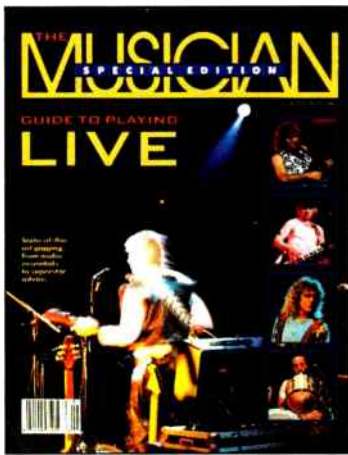
What, you want more of this stuff? Okay, NAMM had numerous high-drool items for bassists, along with the aforementioned Fortress. **Trace Elliot** has revamped its bass heads. Their 150W and 250W head have become 200W and 300W models, respectively, and they've discontinued their old 350W head. The 11-band graphic EQ on the old models is now a 12-band on the new models, having grown a 30 Hz slider to accommodate those deep, deep five- and six-string basses everyone is playing these days. There's also lots of new convenience features like a headphone jack and LED indicators on the remote footswitch. On a humbler level, **Trace Elliot** has also introduced a 100W amp, the AH100 with a seven-band EQ. It can be had as a stand-alone head for \$794 or in a combo configuration, with one 15, for \$1550.

Finally, **Randall** has a new bi-amped bass amp, the RB 2000. Its high-frequency amp puts out 150W and its low-frequency amp a bruising 370W, both into 4 ohms. There's a seven-band EQ, built-in compressor and two effects loops—one for each amplifier. Now if I could only decide whether I prefer the Hot Pink or Red Lizzard [*sic*] finishes....

— Alan di Perna

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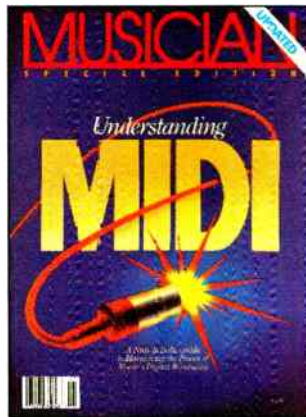
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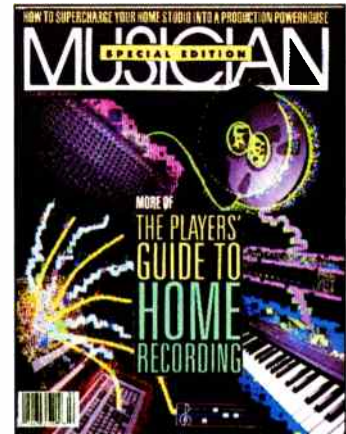
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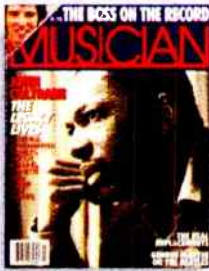
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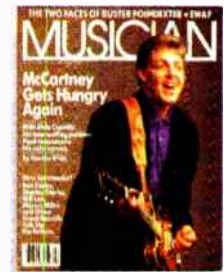
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Listen and judge for yourself. Compare the 302-II system to any other bass system. Then *you* decide how well we stack up (and how easily). The 302 Series II Acoustimass bass system . . . just one of the reasons Bose is becoming the professional system of choice. For the name of your nearest authorized dealer, write Bose Corporation, Professional Products, Department MUS, The Mountain, Framingham, MA 01701-9168 or call us at 1-508-879-7330.

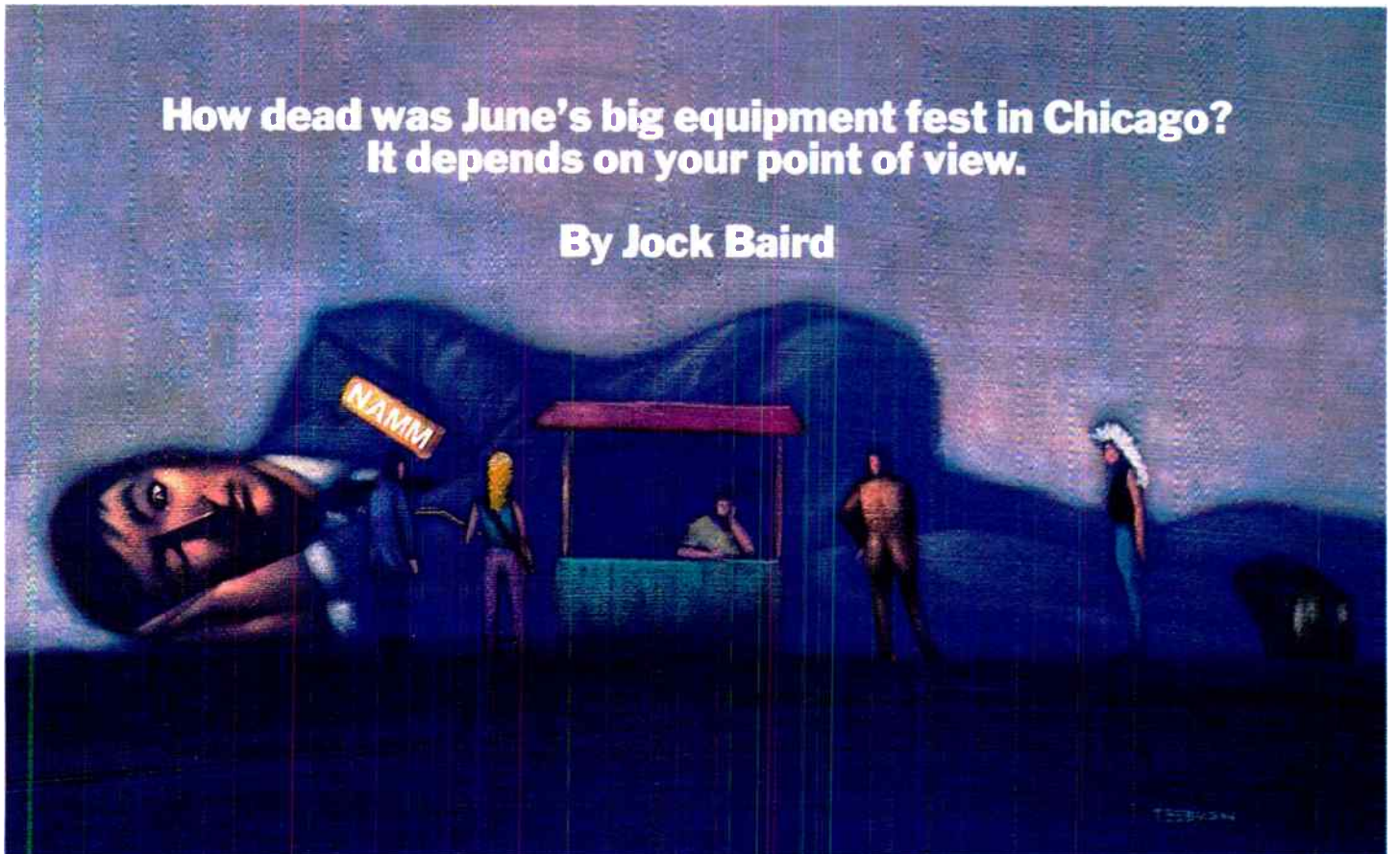
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THE GREAT SUMMER NAMM DEBATER

How dead was June's big equipment fest in Chicago?
It depends on your point of view.

By Jock Baird



BY NOW YOU'VE PROBABLY heard the word about June's annual MI trade show in Chicago. Was it a bit slow? Well, pundits dubbed it "the Wake on the Lake." An oft-repeated joke asked what was the difference between Elvis and summer NAMM, the answer being some people think Elvis is alive. Most of the press corps scrawled R.I.P. on their badges and looked for the bar. But like Mark Twain, reports of the summer NAMM's demise may be premature. Before you send flowers, consider that many of the discouraging words about this Chicago show were a result of some definite prejudices.

First and foremost is anger at the NAMM organization that puts on the two shows each year. Face it, the winter Anaheim show has become the hot ticket, while the summer version has grown steadily sleepier in dealer orders, traffic and new products. Since it costs a bundle to exhibit, there's been a growing movement in the manufacturing community to scale down or bypass the summer show, culminating in a number of major players skipping last year's festivities in Atlanta. Sensing a potential threat to its revenues, NAMM officials last fall amended their bylaws to stipulate that exhibitors must attend the summer show if they wanted to keep their advantageous booth positions for the winter one. With a gun to their heads, most every major manufacturer showed up, though some came in much reduced force. **Roland**, for instance, booked a small room away from the main floors and made the extreme difficulty of locating it part of an amusing ad campaign in the show's daily paper, *Upbeat*. Most exhibitors didn't see even that much humor, and a general cloud of resentment hovered, producing a kind of "Is this all we get for our money?" attitude that filtered into the general mood of the show.

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM TEEBKEN

But was it really all that dead? Gosh, I didn't think so, especially compared to last summer's show. Yes, there were fewer bodies overall, but amidst a sea of tranquility certain booths were going bonkers. Even execs at **Korg**, one of the leaders of the dissident faction, were heard to admit afterwards they were glad they'd come, not surprising given packed conditions there all three days. Companies who booked space down-

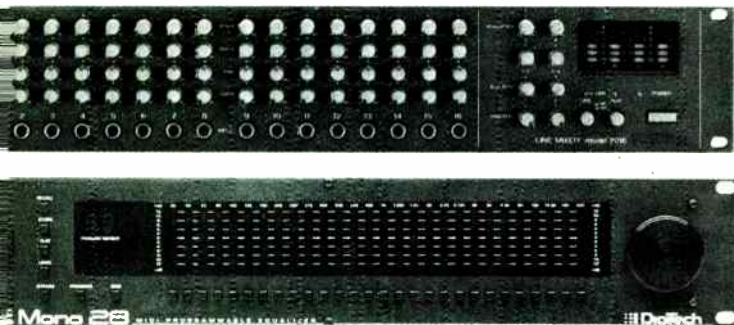
nary, boring working stiffs who don't give a damn about an \$8000 sampler but who may care a lot about \$500 multi-effects, finally going wireless or making their P.A. sound better. Was Chicago NAMM dead? Not for these folks. Maybe not as much flash, not so much sizzle, but plenty of steak, just as you'd expect in a beefy town like Chicago.

To prove my point, I've picked two down-to-earth winners as top new products of summer NAMM, based on utility and price. One is a little \$300 two-track sequencer from **Brother**, a home office computer products company. The MDI-30 may only hold a lowly 7000 notes and has fairly minimal editing facilities, but it does have—ta da—a 3.5-inch disk drive on it. Shrewd MIDIites will immediately see uses, say, taking on live

not promised by Christmas. Now I can hear the howls of the press corps. A dinky sequencer and line mixer chosen as the two best products of NAMM? Wotta hick! Then they'll go back to cruising the aisles for hip new state-of-the-art wonders they'll be using free of charge in the course of writing reviews. But hey, the more likely you are to spend real money on music gear—especially, God forbid, your own—the more important these price performance breakthroughs become.

If sheer weight of numbers has any effect, the trend of the show and of 1989 has to be Guitar Boxes Take to the Rack. There are two schools of thought on this, the first being the rash of multi-effects that include not only the old reverb-delay-modulation standbys but now also distortion, parametric EQ, compression and more. The second school believes that no digital box can really do screaming tube-type distortion, and thus offers specialized rack-mount boxes, many of which have actual, glowing vacuum tubes in them. It seems dozens of both kinds of boxes, half-rack and full, have appeared lately, some at Chicago.

In the all-in-one category I was impressed by the **Yamaha FX500**, a \$500 half-rack unit that chains up to five stages together. Crunch is here aided by a separate compression in addition to the distortion stage. The reverb part seems SPX90ish, which is Yamaha-ese for very nice. The FX500 is 16-bit, has a lot of dynamic MIDI capability and a big display window, and even throws in a headphone preamp and jack for portable practice. Very competitive. Then there's the Roland GP-16, a \$1200 box that has, omigod, 16 effects, including all of the above plus picking filter (remember the Mutron), pitch-shifts, phase-shifts, auto-pans and other cool stuff. Sure they can be chained in any order, you bet there are three sets of stereo outputs with some circuit-tweaking for each form of amplification, and yes there's a new multi-stage noise shaping (or MASH) form of analog-to-digital conversion that's supposed to be equivalent to 18-bit something or other. I mean, this is top-shelf, seize-the-high-ground kind



Fostex 2016 (top), a 16-channel mixer for a mere \$400; (below) Digitech MEQ 28 programmable EQ.

stairs, though, had more to complain about. This lower of the two large exhibition halls at massive McCormick Place, traditionally the home of the cutting-edge MIDI software brigade, was shockingly under-manned and only about half-full—cavernous empty spaces could be glimpsed behind the back wall of curtains. Considering that in years past this floor was the spiritual epicenter of NAMM's vigor, it was downright creepy.

But even subtracting a quarter of the usual attendees, a lot of new product was coming down the chute, especially in the realm of the guitarist. Now very few of these were of the breakthrough variety, but rather of the meat 'n' potatoes, working-player type, more useful than utopian. This did not at all sit well with most of the tech press, accustomed as we've been to a steady diet of digital breakthroughs and screaming visionary headlines (no matter that many of these breakthroughs later proved premature or oversold). Dazed by the high-tech vacuum, the scribes flocked to see Roland's new 16-bit S-770 sampler and listened reverently to this \$8000 box sampling the daylights out of a CD while Roland's Eric Persing twiddled his thumbs (seldom has so much keyboard talent been so underused). It was universally hailed as the show's only "real" news, that and Korg signing on the old **Dave Smith**-led ex-Sequential Circuits R&D force. But the press may've missed a lot of action at summer NAMM that wasn't about the high-tech future, but rather about the flawed present and the penetration of technology to ordi-

gigs instead of that fragile personal computer in your studio—just dump the working versions of your MIDI sequences into the little two-track and bring that, loading song by song. You won't find another disk-drive-equipped sequencer for twice the price. (If 7000 notes isn't enough for you, there's a 14,000-note model for \$80 more called the MDI-40.) And don't overlook its uses as a MIDI system-exclusive librarian. Korg didn't—they had one modified for use with an M1. Call (201) 981-0300 for more data to file. Another new item at NAMM with good value as a sysex storage is the DataDisk, a \$400 rack-mount librarian that **Alesis** cooked up primarily for its own gear but is eminently useful for most anyone else's.

My second big-winner pick is the **Fostex 2016**, a rack-mount 16-channel line mixer that goes for—what, \$400? Well, it couldn't have any effects busses for that price, could it? How about two per channel. And perhaps most impressive is its ability to be run as two independent eight-channel mixers, each with its own effects. Drawbacks? Sure, only 80 dB of noise floor, unbalanced connections and no XLR inputs, and certainly no EQ anywhere. But we're talking 25 bucks a channel here, which cuts in half the current standard. And this isn't a tease—the Fostex 2016 is currently available,



Disk drive price breakthrough: \$300 Brother MDI-30 sequencer.

A noticeable six-string trend has been the proliferation of fancier axes, often well above the \$1000 barrier. Maybe the \$2000 benchmark for a good keyboard has changed guitarists' buying habits, or maybe manufacturers just figured it wasn't much fun knocking off Strat copies for peanuts. Whatever the reason, Chicago NAMM was busting out all over with great new instruments. Here are our 10 favorites, in no particular order of importance.

Hamer Chapparral: Although neck-through-body designs are Hamer's usual M.O., they made a bolt-on exception for this new version of their Chapparral, perhaps the closest to the Strat of any of the guitars on this page. Sacred traditions are broken by using Honduras mahogany on the body and cutting away the neck to the twenty-fourth fret, as well as the punchy Slammer humbucking and two single-coil pickups. The locking tremolo is mounted closer to the body than most, with a cavity cut out for maximum pull potential. A fast axe for \$1500.

Heartfield EX-II: Why Fender feels the need to distribute a new guitar line may be a mystery (other than the fact they're made by the big Fuji Gen-Gakki plant that builds Squiers), but the Heartfields can stand on their own. A sophisticated

Washburn Atlantis: Some players can never get enough fretboard, and for them designer Stephen Davies came up with a cutaway neck that offers up to 36 frets(!) of playing room. His latest cutaway model, this one a bolt-on with 26 frets, is the American-made Atlantis EC26, which packs Seymour Duncan "JB" and single-coil pickups, Sperzel tuning machines and a Kahler whammy for a neat grand.

Peavey Odyssey: Subtitled "Peavey remakes the Les Paul," the Odyssey has some styling innovations you'll either love or hate, but the sound is all there. The triangular neck inlay and blue-green finish are especially striking on this \$1000 beauty. If you're more traditionally inclined, try the \$800 Peavey Generation II, by far the best Tele variation we saw at NAMM.

Heritage Parsons Street V: These are the workers from the old Gibson factory in Kalamazoo that closed down a few years back, and they decided to carry on under the Heritage moniker. The Parsons Street line is a modified Les Paul design that retains that old-time feel. The basic model is \$1300, with options like active humbuckers or piezos. If you want to get real traditional, though, the Heritage Sweet 16 is a terrific update of the L-5.

that wasn't metal enough for the kids, so Steinberger's got a new R (as in Rock) series of the design that certainly should be. The opening salvo is the \$1190 GR-4, loaded with two Duncan Hot Rails pickups and a humbucker. The body is maple with a composite graphite neck, but unlike the M series, it has no binding and thus more rounded edges. The whammy bar is *not* the usual Trans-Trem, but a more metalist model called the R-Trem, optimized for dive bombing.

Ibanez American Master Series: Ibanez has been working the metal side of the street, but here comes back to the center with a classy Stratish update. Attractive maple binding and back with the neck set into a mahogany body for extra sting, the American Masters come with a pair of humbuckers with coil splitting via a five-position switch and a Floyd Rose tremolo. The prettier of the two—some is the \$1500 MA3HH. And speaking of pretty, you should check out the paint jobs coming out of Ibanez's custom paint shop—my favorite is Dali's melting clock painting but all sorts of horror and surrealist imagery is available.

PR5 five-position tone control and a lovely rosewood neck with bird inlays, but its body has been hollowed out—without sound holes—for a rounder, mellower tone. Simply superb.

Yamaha Image Custom: Extra points for the original arched-top body shape designed by Martyr Booth, plus fabulous extras like little red LEDs for fret markers, locking tuning machines, a new active/passive Hybrid Integrated Pickup System (H.I.P.S.) and a custom two-point fulcrum tremolo bar, all for \$1500 list. An all-around great axe.

Ritz Neptune: Apparently Wayne Charvel's marriage to Gibson was an unhappy one, because his designs are now being touted by the new Ritz Guitar Company. They've got the familiar slanted-body top

THE 10 BEST GUITARS AT NAMM



active electronics setup, handsome flame maple top, a maple neck set into an alder body, the Floyd Rose tailpiece and just a nice, fast feel make the \$1329 EX-II a definite keeper. Don't judge the Heartfield line by the cheaper and unsatisfying RR versions, by the way.

Why don't more manufacturers make pickguards out of maple?

Steinberger GR-4: You may recall the M series that came out last year, the first Steinberger that didn't look like a box. Mike Rutherford of Genesis put it to immediate use, but

Paul Reed Smith Signature Series semi-hollow body: Only Smith could price a guitar at \$2900 and not draw a laugh; to a growing number of players they're worth every penny. This model is akin to its Signature series cousins, with two humbuckers, the famed

we've come to know as Charvel's, some more dramatically sloped than others, but what sticks out here are the materials—lovely pieced-together sculptures of various rare wood types in their Exotic series. Even more amazing is the Neptune series, which uses sea shells inlaid into a body finish in one continuous surface. Absolutely breathtaking, and truly worth the extra weight (about as much as a Les Paul). Electronic and tremolo options are extensive and the prices, around \$1600, are entirely reasonable for guitars as remarkable as these.

of stuff. And **Tom Scholz** continued his MIDIzation march by introducing the Rockman XPR multi-processor which has a few new distorto-wrinkles, including something called Lead-Leveler and six separate distortion-processing circuits, as well as five-band graphic EQ, full stereo chorus, delay and reverb, and other goodies, all for a robust \$850.

On the other side of the street were the specialized tube-mongers, led by a German firm, **Hughes & Kettner**. Two little boxes named the Cream Machine and the Crunch Master have been knocking around for many months but are finally in America. The \$350 Cream Machine slides more toward the traditional British, saturated-tube Marshall sound, including a separate "tube amp" volume knob on the back. The \$370 Crunch Master veers more to the American/Fender side, with a three-band equalizer and broader range of distortion capability. Both have outputs for clean, crunched or mixed signals for different processing setups, and have a great "Cabinetulator" feature that electronically reproduces the voicing of speaker cabinets in a direct-line output for recording or DI. Hughes & Kettner make this feature available in a cute little \$99 red box. Five thousand are in service in Europe and the U.K. This company also did some interesting work in MIDI-programmable amplifiers and has a nice

\$1000 tube amp system called the ATS. And speaking of three-letter products, there was a nice \$300 preamp from **ACT** (Analog Control Technology) of Kalamazoo that used two 12AX7 tubes for true authenticity.

Other crunchy multi-effect action included the MM4 Metal Machine from **Digitech**, which has reverb, EQ and delays as well as compression and distortion. And Digitech also came up with a big MIDI-programmable graphic EQ release with three \$550 units, the MEQ 28, 14 and 7. These use a button for each ISO frequency center and an alpha knob for setting levels—now that's user friendly. And Digitech also brought out a beefed-up DSP-128 called the DSP-256, as well as a scaled-down version of their Smart Shift harmonizer numbered the HM4. Alesis was back with yet another MIDIVerb update, this one numbered III but closer in nature to a QuadraVerb since it has four separate stages that can be chained together. **Lexicon** continued its successful LXP series with a \$500 multi-effects box, the LXP-5. And **Sony** brought back the SDR-1000 reverb that **Ibanez** stopped selling—it seems they were

manufacturing it all along and decided it was too good to let go. The SDR-1000, you may remember, sounded excellent and was capable of running two different programs on each half if desired for its \$1000 tag.

But a far less familiar entry to the rack-mount sweepstakes was **Mesa/**



VACUUM TUBES HEAT UP NAMM

IT'S BEEN BUILDING for a while now; but we currently seem to be in the midst of a Vacuum Tube Renaissance. In fact, one of the most exciting things on the ol' NAMM floor was **Seymour Duncan's** new 84-40

tube amp/speaker combo. For a 40W amp (into your choice of one 12 or two 10s), the thing lets out a monstrous roar. And it distorts so sweetly—a talent the Duncan guys attribute to the four EL-84 tubes they use in the power amp stage. The preamp stage is all-tube too, though. You get two channels: clean and distorted, the latter with a three-band passive EQ. There's an effects loop that slithers in between the preamp and power amp stages. They've even thrown in a good old-fashioned spring reverb—no extra charge on the \$595 list price.

Longtime amp champ **Paul Rivera** (an L34 man, for those of you who obsess over tubes) has come out with a line of combo amps. It's designed around three different heads—a 120W stereo, a 100W mono and a 60W mono. You can get any of the heads in a stand-alone configuration, or mated with a variety of speaker loads in a combo rig. At the heart of each model are two channels,

one with Rivera's SL "metal crunch" voicing and the other with his M "Fender/Dumble/Boogie-style" voicing. Each channel has three-band EQ; and on channel two you can kick in Rivera's patented Ninjaboost. The design also includes Rivera's Slavemaster load resistor/power attenuator circuit, which can be applied to either channel. The Slavemaster has its own effects loop, in addition to a main effects loop. There's built-in reverb and—on the 120W stereo models only—chorus. Lots of options in a line that ranges from \$999 to \$1799.

But there's even more good news from Tube Town. After a few false starts on these shores, Germany's **Hughes & Kettner** has finally set up regular U.S. distribution. Which means we should all have much freer access to the company's killer tube preamps, MIDI-smart/all-tube combo amps and other goodies. At this NAMM show,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 78



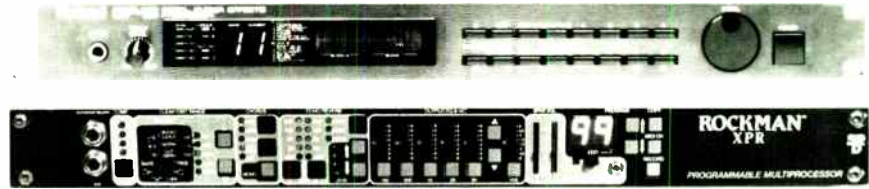
Boogie, who brought in a primo MIDI Matrix switching system with 10 function switch inputs, six effects loops, an A/B switcher that'll switch inputs and outputs, and even a fancy Abacus MIDI foot controller for program switching, all for a grand. Bob Bradshaw, look out! (The foot controller is also available separately for \$380.) Mesa/Boogie is also re-releasing one of its vintage models and has a great new Sus-4 shock-mount rack system that should increase the survivability of all those racks we've been talking about. Prices range from a \$175 4U job to a \$335 20U model. Of course, if you can't afford that, **Gibson** has a new molded-plastic Gigrack with six rack spaces and a cover, case and carrying handle. Hey, it's a rack-mount world. You can't just let 'em pile up on your amp, you know.

Another big trend at NAMM was Mike Companies Start Making Their Own Wireless Systems, perhaps inspired by **Shure's** big offensive last year. There was **Electro-Voice's** GS-1000 (guitar) and MS-1000 (mike, with an N/DYN 757 capsule) units, which are true-diversity, use DNX companding circuitry and transmit 50 mW of power, the legal maximum. At around \$1200, these are definitely pro-oriented. Then there are two new guitar systems from **Beyer**, one the NE 42.10 non-diversity wireless and the other the NE 42.20 true-diversity receiver, either to be matched with the TS 42.10 transmitter. Strong selling points include the four-position sensitivity switch for different guitar inputs, low-noise LN companding, a squelch circuit and an equalizer network to match various amplifier voicings. It'll handle a hundred feet of range with no problem.

Then there's the **Audio-Technica** system, including the ATW-1031 for guitar and the ATW-1032 for mikes. Both are diversity systems for around \$750, altogether competitive considering there are LEDs for viewing RF and audio levels, noise-handling circuits and 200 feet of range. On the upper end, Sony brought out a new \$4800 job, the WRR-28 UHF wireless system, but for those of us on beer budgets Sony recommends their slightly older VHF 410 and 420 units, priced around \$1100. And even **Peavey's** getting into the fray with its tiny Wavelink belt-pack guitar setup. It's much-reduced (the transmitter weighs only 3.8 ounces) but it has companding and filtering circuits, a simple sensitivity control and can run on any of six operating frequencies. Does this mean Fostex and AKG, the last major mike companies without wireless units, will be coming out with theirs next January? Stay tuned.

When it comes to working musicians, nobody works harder for their money than those singles and duos that fill the lounges of America. And P.A. systems for these poor souls have always been 1) too heavy and 2) too directional. After

Holy Grail of spreading the stereo image throughout the whole listening environment. Those still serving in those particular trenches will call **Unique Musical Products** at (217) 342-9211 and make further inquiries.



Crunch city, here we come: Roland's fancy GP-16, Scholz R&D's Rockman XPR and Hughes & Kettner's tube preamps, the Crunch Master and Cream Machine



Mike honcho Audio-Technica's entry into the wireless wars, the ATW-1031

all, you can't point your Twin or P.A. cabinet at those old ladies in the front row—it'll straighten their permanents. A new, very portable system called **Dawn** is what a lot of these lounge lizards need. It's somewhat revolutionary because it's highly unidirectional, since the speakers point straight up and then the sound is radiated to all points around the cabinet. The stereo image is maintained in an impressive portion of the room. How do these little cabinets kick out the bass? They don't—a bigger throat-loaded subwoofer in the middle provides the lows, which tend to be more unidirectional anyway and don't need to be split. The bandwidths of the two Dawn systems were impressive indeed, though the beefier MI-510, which sells for \$750, is probably the one I'd recommend, as opposed to the smaller \$500 MI-36. (A larger MI-1015 is also on the way.) The MI-510, once collapsed, can be packed away into one 32-pound package you can carry out in one hand—that includes the stand-mounts. Since I've personally done a lot of time in the lounges, I thought the Dawn system was the most original and overdue product at summer NAMM, particularly because P.A. makers have long been chasing the

Of course, for those who don't want their P.A. to be at all subtle, **JBL** has some new speaker activity of its own. The idea was to make use of that whoosh of air the speaker cone makes as it goes out the back. Why not use that air to help cool the magnet down, improving stability at higher power levels and allowing you to lighten the speaker since it wouldn't need such big heat sinks? So JBL's engineers started drilling holes in their magnet systems in search of the perfect arrangement. At one point they got up to 40 very small holes (which worked okay but whistled terribly) and finally worked their way back to three good-sized ones. This became known as their Vented Gap Cooling arrangement. It's fascinating to watch the speaker kick out bass frequencies while enough air comes out the back to blow out a match. And the speaker itself is said to run up to 100 degrees F. cooler, which is damn cool. The first of the JBL Vented Gap line are the 2206 (12"), 2226 (15") and 2241 (18") models. And who says there are no new ideas in sound reinforcement? Then again, some of us would settle for some old ideas priced cheaper, such as the MX-700 power amp from **QSC**. Packing 225 watts into four ohms for a measly

\$600, it's what the copywriters call cost-effective and I call a bargain.

One of the biggest NAMM newsmakers was **Tascam**, who unveiled not only the 644 cassette multi-tracker we told you about last month, but an eight-track version with 20 inputs along the same line called the 688 and priced at \$3300 (that includes a nifty meter bridge). Tascam also finally got their \$2000 MIDlizer released—although we told you about it last year, it's only now finally hit the market. But perhaps their biggest ace in the hole was their new one-inch 24-track deck, the MSR-24, the ultimate in two-headed tape decks. It'll do sync


lock-ups, auto-locates, has dbx defeatable in groups of eight, and generally brings completely professional specs to a recorder that costs less than \$15,000. Okay, that's what a new car goes for, but it's significantly less than any 24-track deck I know of.

Other recording news included a new member of Fostex's 4000 series, the 4020 Event Controller. This \$1300 rack will run eight relay contacts off of SMPTE time code for up to 999 events. It'll start sequencers, cart machines, bypass effects units, start and stop CD players and other difficult studio duties at any SMPTE address you ask. It'll also

run off MIDI commands, has two RS-422 serial ports, is supported by Fostex's F.A.M.E. automation system and doesn't need any other 4000 Series product to do its job. Also winning extra points in the recording studio environment was a vigorous presentation by **Conneaut Audio Devices** (CAD) of Conneaut, Ohio. They make a very good-looking line of mixers, processors and microphones—in the latter category, CAD was showing a potential competitor to the vaunted Neumann U-47 mike that'll sell in the 700s. Keep an eye on this one.


No account of NAMM would be complete without mentioning Roland's revival of the **Rhodes** piano. This is an entirely digital, sample-based recreation of the '70s classic, done with significant input from Harold Rhodes himself. Even allowing for some interesting tweaking of the sounds, it's difficult to see exactly why Roland undertook a project of this magnitude other than as a way to reach a portion of the electric piano market that mistrusts newer technology or the Roland nameplate. The new Rhodes models were unveiled with a long medley of '70s classics, underscoring a definite back-to-the-future theme, but for this writer just getting rid of the back-breaking weight of the old Rhodes is still not enough to warrant a sequel. Hey, *these* are the good old days.

That's all I've got to say about Summer NAMM at the moment, but look elsewhere on these pages. Read the accompanying stories on hot new guitars, tube amps and MIDI/synth happenings. Then come back and tell me this was a dead show, I dare you. Wake on the Lake? It sure kept me awake.

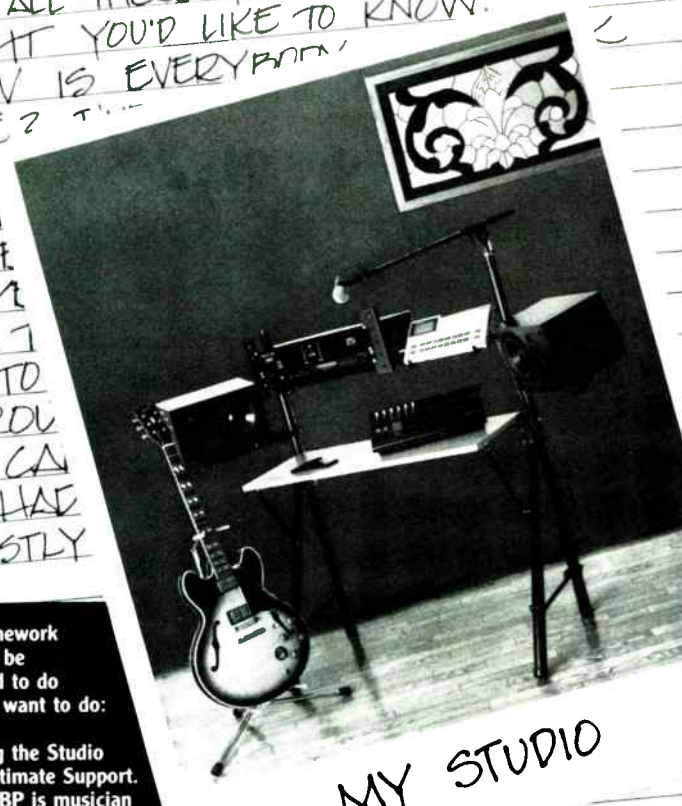
Wide awake. 

MIDI from page 91

panel, fibre-optic connectors—to create a MIDI super system, or, in other words, a Local Area Network. But the real kick in the waterproof jodhpurs is that *any data format* can be converted to MediaLink. This includes digital audio, SMPTE... you name it. Of course that doesn't mean too much right now, since there's presently no hardware for converting any of these things into MediaLink. So, for \$1500, the MidiTap is a good MIDI patchbay today and... maybe... the heart of a true virtual studio tomorrow.


Through a man's eyes, I suddenly saw the folly of my boyish ways. There's no such thing as a dead NAMM show. Hey, just ask Roy Orbison, or the Ayatollah... Any of those guys'll be glad to back me up. 

DEAR MOM —
I FINALLY CLEANED UP MY ROOM!
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, I JUST
THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW
HOW IS EVERYBODY
THERE? THE...
WITH
AFTER
THE 1
YE
FOR 1
IN TO
THRU
CA
I HAD
MOSTLY



MY STUDIO

Pictured Above: HS-26BP (Rack Rails and Mic Adapter optional)



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We did our homework so that you can be better organized to do what you really want to do: Make Music.
Introducing the Studio Organizer by Ultimate Support. The HS-26BP is musician designed, tested, and approved... you helped create it. The Studio Organizer combines ergonomics, options and clean, good looks for a setup that is surprisingly affordable. And incredibly efficient. Bring one home today. After all, your mother said you could go anywhere...once you've cleaned up your room.
The Studio Organizer: The Ultimate Advantage. Guaranteed for life.

We have many competitors. But no competition.



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PROFESSIONAL MICROPHONES • HEADPHONES • WIRELESS MICROPHONES • INFRA-RED SYSTEMS**

Stalking the Wild MIDI Machines

By Alan di Perna

SHIVERING, THE IRON-gray taste of sleep still in my mouth, I focused my eyes on the empty expanse in front of me. Vast and desolate, as though forsaken of all God's creatures, it wasn't what I'd expected NAMM to look like. Where were the

punching up one great sound after another from the U-20's bank of 128 presets, ferocious in 30-voice polyphony. There were acoustic instrument timbres and even samples of wild D-50 sounds. Once I'd exhausted these, I discovered that the \$1700 U-20 will also play ROM cards from the Roland U-110

weighted wooden keyboard and an extra 512K of RAM for loading even more sounds. The T2 has a 76-note keyboard and the T3's the family's 61-note calf. On the T2 and T3, the 512K RAM block is available as an add-on option.

"And see that rack-mount unit dodging into the underbrush there? That's the Korg M3R. Essentially, it's a single-rack-space version of the M1R without a sequencer. You get the same amount of programs and combinations (100 each), and even some sounds not found on the M1 or M1R. A neat kill for around \$1200. Sounds can be edited on the unit itself, or you can use the optional RE1 remote editor for a larger display window."

Then Chief Running Status led the way to a clearing, ringed with majestic pines. In its center stood a full-sized keyboard and a sleek half-rack module. "The big feller is Kurzweil's K1200, an 88-key version of their K1000. And the little one is the new Kurzweil 900MX micro expander. It has 60 of Kurzweil's best sampled sounds and four Mbytes of memory onboard, with an additional 30 sounds available on ROM cards. There's 12-voice polyphony and five-part multitimbral capabilities—all for \$959."

A realization came to me. "If E-mu doesn't get the Proteus out on the market soon, they're going to wake up to find that someone's eaten most of their sales."



Roland entered the 16-bit sampling waters with the \$8000 S-770.

bellowing herds of hot new products? The call of the wild dealers, eager to restock their hometown music stores?

Looking back, I met the accusing gaze of my faithful Indian guide, Chief Running Status. "A true hunter can track down fresh MIDI gear anywhere," he said, reading my mind. Indeed, how many devastatingly lean NAMMs had he survived without complaint? The weathered lines on his face bore silent testimony to more severe product blights than this.

Suddenly, as if to prove the truth of his words, the dogs set up a deafening howl and lit out toward the **Roland** exhibit. Sure enough, they'd cornered the most powerful sampler Roland has ever introduced—the S-770. No 12-bit cub, this one towered before our ears: a 16-bit linear giant!

"There it is, kemosabe: a fully grown sampler. With a standard SCSI interface, AES/EBU digital inputs, sampling at 48, 44.1, 24 and 22.05 kHz, 24 voices and two Mbytes of internal RAM—expandable to 16. And for \$7995, it's yours!"

A twig snapped behind us. We whirled around and found ourselves face-to-face with Roland's new U-20 sample player, its 61-note, velocity- and aftertouch-sensitive keyboard gleaming in the morning light. Before I knew what had happened, I was just inches from it,

sample library, and that all these sounds can be pumped through an onboard digital reverb chip—the same one Roland uses in the R-8 drum machine. I caught my breath just in time to master the U-20's six-part (plus a drum track) multitimbral capabilities. "Got it," I yelled.

With the scent of MIDI data strong in our nostrils, we had no trouble tracking down the **Korg** booth. There, a family of new synths, the T1, T2 and T3, grazed peacefully. "If you know your M1 lore,



Korg tweaked its hit M1 into the more potent T series.

you won't have any trouble with these." Running Status whispered as we crouched in the damp foliage. "They're basically M1s with twice the ROM program memory (eight Mbytes), new sounds, built-in 3.5-inch floppy disk drives and enlarged, improved LCD displays. Sequencer memory is up to a big 55,000 notes. See the T1 there? He's the bull of the herd, with an 88-note

"You catch on fast, kemosabe. That's the law of the synth forest."

Suddenly Chief Running Status dropped to the floor with a cougar's silent wariness. He placed an ear to the ground and listened intently. "Big buzz from the computer industry," he pronounced gravely. "Coming this way." It wasn't long before a compact but powerful creature hove into view. "Now what

do you call that?" I asked in bewilderment. "Atari calls it Stacy," he replied. "It's the portable version of their ST computer: specially bred for survival in the wilderness, with a track ball instead of a mouse and a hi-res monochrome LCD instead of a monitor. But you can plug in a mouse and a monitor if you want; so it's easily domesticated. Energetic little critter too; it can run for up to 35 hours on eight C batteries. It comes with one Mbyte of memory and a 3.5-inch drive for \$1495. You can also get two or four megs and a second floppy or 20 Mbyte hard drive."

My eyes widened. "Now musicians can use all their favorite ST software out on the gig trail."

"That's right. And never forget: bringing sequences on the road is one of the biggest problems the MIDI outdoorsman faces. To play back your sequences, you need something rugged and uncomplicated—like one of these."

He held out a 1U rack-mount unit: the Midibuddy from Acme Digital, making its first expedition to NAMM. "This is what you call a disk-based spooling sequencer. You just play a sequence into it, via MIDI, from your home computer. Then you bring the Midibuddy on the road to play your sequences. It'll sync to and generate MIDI clock with song position pointer. And you can get an optional SMPTE reader/writer for just \$100. The sequences are read right off the disk, so you're not limited by the device's internal memory. There's even an optional SCSI interface and 40 Mbyte hard drive. The Midibuddy is also a programmable patchbay and MIDI processor/mapper. And it's got an RS232/422 port for direct communication with other computers. It could be a man's best friend (next to ol' Shep here) for \$995.

"But for a cheaper, smaller—if less powerful—approach to taking your sequences on the road, try one of these." Running Status tucked a small device in the pocket of my flannel hunting shirt. It was Anatek's Pocket Record (\$149), also new at NAMM and due out in October. "It's a 15,000-event single-track MIDI data recorder that'll slave to MIDI clock, among other accomplishments," he explained. "And like all of Anatek's products—including their new Pocket Transpose (\$129), it runs on neither batteries nor main power, drawing its juice from the MIDI cable itself."

As Running Status imparted his product wisdom, a strange, deeply spiritual transformation took place. The barren NAMM landscape became a lush forest, teeming with new tech ideas. Like MusicSoft's TransMidi (\$499.95), a

device for sending MIDI data over a conventional wireless rig. And Digidesign's DAT I/O (\$995), which transfers audio data in the digital domain from a DAT player to the Apple Mac, where it can be edited via Digidesign's Sound Tools system and then transferred digitally back to DAT....

Ahhwwwwooooooohhh! An eerie howl broke my transcendent vision. "Lone Wolf," Chief Running Status solemnly declared. He was right. Lone Wolf, the new L.A.-based company, was introducing their MidiTap. It's all got to do with Local Area Networks (LANs), the latest acronym from the land of Big Computer Doublespeak. From the outside, the MidiTap looks innocuous

enough: a 1U rack with four sets of MIDI ports, an RS232/422 interface and a fibre-optic connector. And in effect, the MidiTap is a MIDI patchbay—familiar enough territory for a real MIDI man. Any MIDI input can be routed to any MIDI output. You can store 128 of these routing configurations—called LANscapes—in memory.

But how does the routing take place? Ah, that's where the trail twists. Once inside the unit, MIDI messages and all other incoming data get transformed into a high-speed, fibre-optic data protocol called MediaLink. This means, among other things, that multiple MidiTaps can be interconnected—via those rear-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 88

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BATTY PRINCE, TORN BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

P R I N C E

Batman
(Warner Bros.)

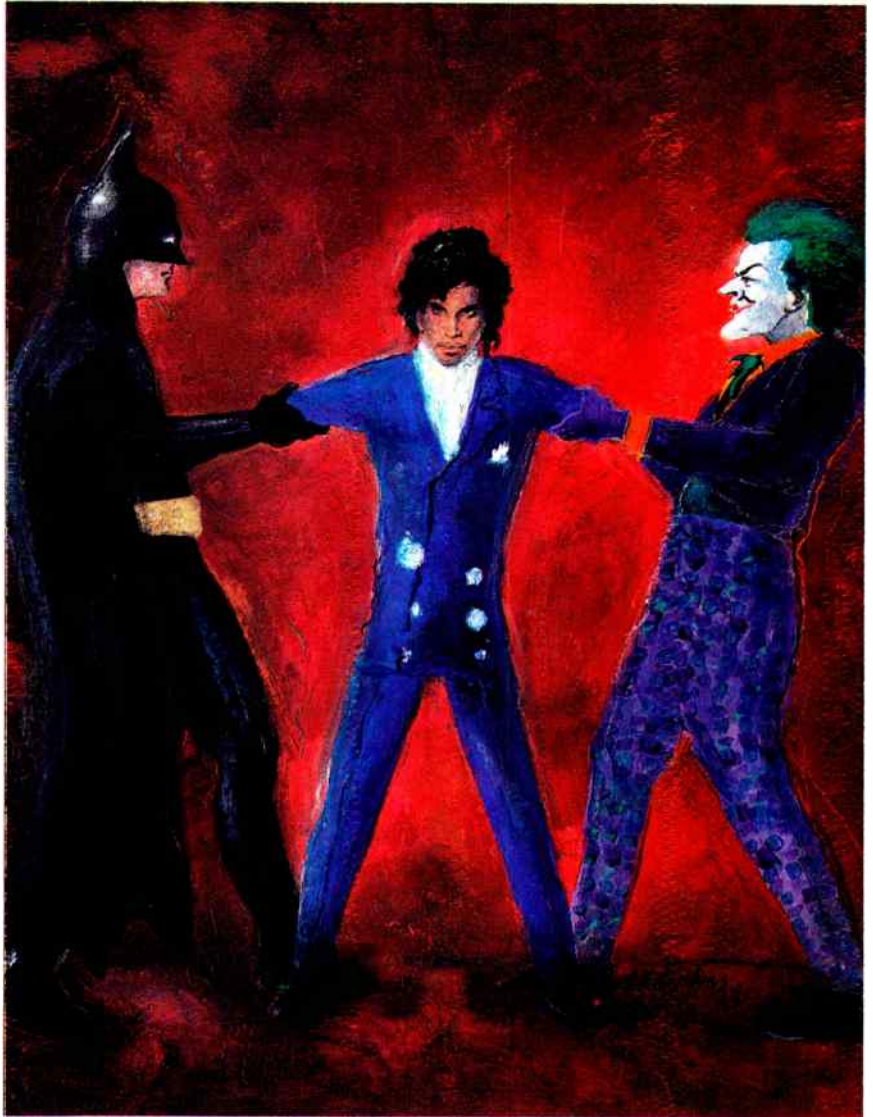
M A V I S S T A P L E S

Time Waits for No One
(Paisley Park)

BACK AT THE beginning of the decade, when Prince's musical powers made his eventual superstardom a sure thing, all anyone wondered about Prince was, as *Controversy* teasingly enquired, whether he was black or white, straight or gay? Now it's not so easy. After frittering away the audience he gained through *Purple Rain*, Prince seems more puzzling than that. Sure, he's probably the most gifted pop musician of his generation, but what good does that do when records like *Lovesexy* are borderline nuts?

Perhaps an answer can be found with *Batman*, and, to a lesser degree, Mavis Staples' *Time Waits for No One*. Although both albums are musically demanding, they're also listenable in a way Prince albums haven't been since *Purple Rain*. Part of that has to do with the straightforward funk base both albums build from, but this isn't simply a matter of getting on the good foot. What makes these albums so approachable isn't the funk but the *focus*; finally, Prince is working within a framework that can keep his internal demons in check.

If *Batman* seems an unlikely solution to Prince's problems with content, forget the plot and concentrate on the morality play underneath. As Prince sees it, *Batman* is about a man (Bruce Wayne) burning to do good (quench crime and love Vicki Vale), yet aching to do bad (kill criminals and avenge the blood of his parents). Then there's the Joker, an id incarnate who, like Milton's Satan, seems to get all the good lines. Because we've read the comic, it's obvious how this power imbalance should be resolved, but what makes *Batman* so interesting is Prince's abso-



lute hesitance to bring about that conclusion; no wonder "Batdance," which closes the album, shudders at the brink of sensual abandon before Prince screams, "Stop!"

Musically, Prince maintains that sense of brinkmanship by keeping the music forever on edge, spiking the bottom-heavy grooves with sampled dialogue and bits of jazzy dissonance. *Batman*'s songs are anxious and tense, as if sung by a man watching his own fuse burn down to the nub; the Joker's numbers, on the other hand, have a sassy confidence that makes you wonder who our hero is really rooting for. And Vicki?

Let's just say the sugar walls have never sounded sweeter and leave it at that.

Given *Batman*'s lust for one thing or another, you might expect the worst from Prince's production of Mavis Staples' *Time Waits for No One*. Surprisingly, the material is wonderfully appropriate, while Prince's contributions are at once supportive and provocative.

As with *Batman*, the key seems to be Prince's ability to write in character. Rather than approach the mating game with predatorial hunger, "Interesting" contrasts his funk against the singer's bemused detachment, letting the song play a more subtle power game. Simi-

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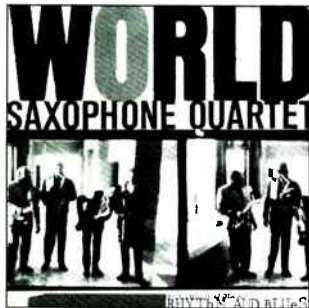
World Radio History
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larly, "Jaguar" sidesteps its pursuit-and-capture plot by emphasizing a feline metaphor that finds a very respectable home for Staples' hungry growls.

It remains to be seen whether Prince can maintain the sense of balance he exhibits here; his, needless to say, has not been the most predictable of careers. For the time being, let's just close with a quote from *Batman*:

*I've seen the future, and it will be
I've seen the future, and it works.*

— J.D. Considine



WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET

Rhythm 'n Blues
(Elektra/Musician)

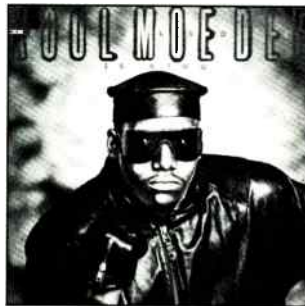
JUST AS WSQ triumphantly addressed the music of Ellington/Strayhorn on its own terms a couple of years ago, so they now tip their mouthpieces to the vernacular music of their formative years. Aside from the three originals, the six arrangements here comprise an overview of '60s soul that ranges from James Brown ("Night Train") to Gamble and Huff ("For the Love of Money"). These are not reverent reconstitutions of the Famous Flames' tight, blaring zig-zags or the monolithic Stax brass/reeds. WSQ interprets with an often kinetic majesty that claims R&B (emphasis on rhythm) as much as part of their outlook as free jazz, or the smooth blend of a big-band reed section. I'm surprised they didn't do it sooner.

It's as arrangers that WSQ have shown the most growth; we always knew they could play. Alto saxophonist Julius Hemphill's loping take on "Let's Get It On" evokes a satin-sheets texture with Oliver Lake's soprano sax as the lead voice. On the other hand, "Night Train" explodes with darting, interlocking polyrhythms that turn progressively wilder with each chorus. Hamiet Bluiett crafted this one as well as his own "I Heard That," a part of WSQ's live shows for some time but recorded here for the first time. David Murray's tenor sax

swirls and climbs granite cliffs of horn riffs, anchored in place by Bluiett's baritone sax. The quartet's clarity, power and uniform texture are nothing short of grand.

Otis Redding gets two tributes with "Dock of the Bay" and "Try a Little Tenderness." The former is an over-rated song by Redding's standards and fails to tell us anything new about either WSQ or Otis. Murray's rhapsodic treatment of the "Tenderness" ballad seems elegiac and oddly out of place until the background figures quietly ascend. Then Murray's tenor flops and turns with keening agitation; the tune winds down quietly in a kind of post-coital reverie.

When WSQ started over a decade ago, their stock-in-trade was abstract four-way blowfests. They've retained their vigor, refined their textures and have grown into standard-bearers of the new jazz. — Kirk Silsbee



K O O L M O E D E E

Knowledge Is King
(RCA/Jive)

HE MAKES hit records. The girls won't leave him alone. The man considers his spiritual healing powers comparable to those of Christ. And yet, rapmaster Kool Moe Dee appears to be a troubled soul on *Knowledge Is King*, his third LP. The boasts are tiresome, and the consistently glum tone is symptomatic of a first-class sourpuss.

Not that you'd wanna complain to his face, 'cause Kool Moe's skills are formidable. A blunt, meat 'n' potatoes kinda dude, he reels off a flurry of rapid-fire rhymes with sullen authority, while the beats mix solid pounding and righteous James Brown riffs. Although the angry throb of "I Go to Work" won't win awards for innovation, it satisfies in a primal way what fancier stuff can't.

Maybe Kool Moe needs a break from the cutthroat rap wars, though: He seems stifled by the tough-guy role he's fashioned for himself. Whether KMD's "rollin' over rappers like a U.S. tank"

("Get the Picture") or obliterating the competition with atomic force ("I'm Blowin' Up"), you get the feeling our hero hasn't had much fun lately. Kool Moe brings the same combative spirit to matters of romance, chasing off gold diggers with the paranoid "They Want Money." ("Hear dollar signs in your careless whispers," he snarls.) Lest potential honeys get too discouraged, he describes his ideal mate in the atypically loose "All Night Long," a hip-hop derivative of "The Dating Game." However, the superwoman he requires could only exist in the grandiose cartoon world that nurtures his own star persona.

When fantasy gives way to reality, KMD's narratives take on a power lacking elsewhere. The streetlife snapshots from "The Avenue," the anti-materialist slant of the title track and the bitter saga of racist oppression in "Pump Your Fist" resonate with urgent, unfeigned passion. Finally, the grim demeanor makes sense. Maybe Kool Moe Dee ought to drop all that self-important jive and stick to dispensing harsh, necessary truths. *Knowledge Is King* misses more often than not, but when it connects, watch out. — Jon Young



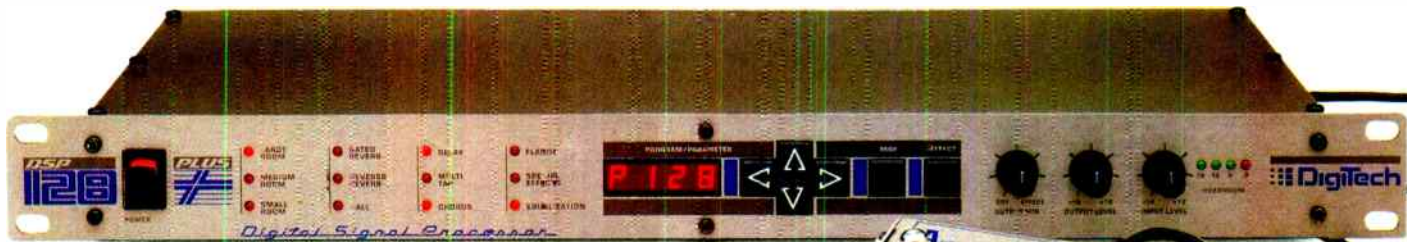
THE KINSEY REPORT

Midnight Drive
K E N N Y N E A L

Devil Child
(Alligator)

ANYONE DOUBTING that the blues persist today as a hand-to-hand tradition is directed to this pair of Alligator albums by second-generation bluesmen, who are continuing to build on the formidable foundation of their fathers. Literally. While guitarist/vocalist Donald Kinsey (one of three siblings in the Kinsey Report) has played with artists as diverse as Albert King, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, he's worked for many years behind his father Lester "Big Daddy" Kinsey, a Gary, Indiana-based bluesman. Guitarist/singer/harp player Kenny Neal's pappy is Baton Rouge's

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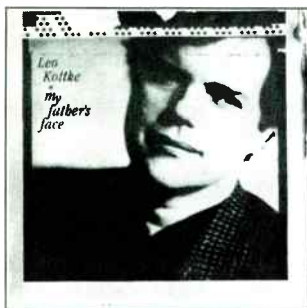
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Rafal Neal, a harmonica player in the Slim Harpo mode.

The Kinseys have evolved quickly into a sophisticated blues-rock band. *Midnight Drive*, a sequel to 1987's concussive label debut *Edge of the City*, shows off the same streamlined contemporary sound that distinguished its predecessor. In tandem with rhythm guitarist Ron Prince, brothers Kenneth and Ralph Kinsey lay down a flexible bottom for Donald's clear-voiced singing and limber, imaginative soloing. The caliber of the writing usually equals that of the singing and playing. Slices of street life like "Midnight Drive" and "Nowhere to Go, Nothing to Lose," the seething protest number "Free South Africa" and a slightly funk-ed-out cover of Percy Mayfield's "River's Invitation" stand out in a strong repertoire. With *Midnight Drive*, the Kinsey Report maintains its rep as one of modern blues' most forward-looking units.

Kenny Neal's bayou boogie is rooted more deeply in the past, but *Devil Child*, his second album for King Snake Productions' Bob Greenlee, is still an unassuming and hardly antique delight. Neal's rough voice, steely Buddy Guy-like guitar and rough-hewn, lazy harp are heard to best advantage on comic numbers like "Bad Check," "Can't Have Your Cake (and Eat It Too)" and "Yack Yack Yack," although he proves his way with a deeper blues on the wrenching "The Son I Never Knew." In Neal's able hands, the old Excello Records swamp thang stays rigorously up-to-date. — Chris Morris



LEO KOTTKE

My Father's Face
(Private Music)

GOOD THING that Leo Kottke's got a great sense of humor, because he's going to be haunted by geese farts the day he dies. The guitarist compared his voice to them back in '69, on the liner to *6 and 12 String Guitar*, and Leo—babe—if you hadn't brought it up, we never woulda thunk it. Twenty years

later, on his third album for a new-age label, the barn door's open and the geese are farting again.

This is as it should be. While Kottke's been hard at work honing his unique guitar style—not to mention being busy making an honest living—others have borrowed from him (and from John Fahey, Peter Lang, even Sandy Bull), dressed up their respective ramblings with digital sound and boring cover landscapes and confused the hell out of anyone who ever thought they liked hearing an acoustic guitar. So after two instrumental albums with bassist Buell Neidlinger producing—nifty albums that might as well have had "File Under New Age" stamped larger than Kottke's name on the covers, because Private Music mostly releases that kind of music and mall record store clerks are getting younger every day—T-Bone Burnett has stepped in, brought Los Lobos' David Hidalgo with him and unleashed the geese on close to half the songs on this record.

What we end up with is a largely improved version of *Time Step*, Kottke's final Chrysalis album, released in '83 and also produced by Burnett. Sure, there's a new-age spin to be found on *My Father's Face*, but despite the odd glockenspiel and tympani, this is Kottke's admittedly strange vision of pop music, and it works. Most notably on "Jack Gets Up," I'd say, which successfully combines the near-psycho lyrical premises of Neil Young's "Last Dance" and Leonard Cohen's "Dress Rehearsal Rag" into a strangely mirthful spoken verse that includes the album's title and bonus shaving references. No one else could—or would *want* to—release this song, which is its ultimate charm.

That Kottke once recorded the near-gloomiest dirge of the '70s—*Greenhouse's* "Tiny Island," which I only mention because you really ought to hear it—and still manages to give his albums names like *Regards from Chuck Pink*, speaks volumes about letting the geese fart where and when they may. In or out of the new age, Leo Kottke *still* isn't walking like a duck, and we should be grateful. — Dave DiMartino

**HEINER GOEBBELS/
HEINER MÜLLER**

The Man in the Elevator
(ECM)

BY MADLY FUSING idioms, assembling a who's-who band from the ranks of the jazz-pop avant garde and bemoaning civilization run amok, West

German keyboardist and idea-man Heiner Goebbels has created a sprawling, many-headed beast of a record. It could have been doomed from the outset, a big concept whose time should not have come. Instead, *The Man in the Elevator* is a fine example of new-music experimentalism that hits paydirt. Goebbels adheres to the belief that forms, disciplines and rules were made to be broken, and the end result is by turns playful, ominous, sultry and badass



funky—a polystylistic fever dream.

Setting a text by the prolific German playwright Heiner Müller that's ringing with Orwellian overtones, Goebbels fashions a suite that moves seamlessly from idiom to idiom. Addressing musical and cultural language as something elastic, suitable for stretching, Goebbels plots this "aural drama" with multiple points of departure and arrival. The initial sweep of sound and meandering narration deposits us deep in a lounge-y, lopsided calypso vamp. Arto Lindsay, with his irony-laden plainsong voice, repeats the phrase "Five minutes too early would be what I'd call true punctuality" like the mantra of an urbanite caught in the grinding machinery of the fast track. Lindsay plays the tale's unofficial protagonist (something like Jonathan Pryce's character in *Brazil*), the nice American boy trapped in an elevator to hell. His opposite number, Ernst Stotzner, sputters angrily in German.

Goebbels' structure allows for deposits of kitschy cabaret, of free playing over quirky rhythm beds and crunching power guitar chords. We hear echoes of the Beatles, Django Reinhardt and M-Base rising through the mist. Into this landscape of madness and dread, Fred Frith tosses erratic/erotic guitar sounds, George Lewis plays a mostly supportive role on trombone, while the incisive Ned Rothenberg contributes signature sax excursions and Don Cherry puts in some plaintive bent notes.

But *Elevator* is not so much a showcase for players as it is a new kind of musical theater. Goebbels embraces the

Perfect Pitch method verified at Ohio State University!

They laughed at me and doubted me.... until I showed them the secret to Perfect Pitch!

A true story by David L. Burge

We were in ninth grade when I first heard that Linda had "Perfect Pitch."

Supposedly, she could name any pitch *by ear!* I was told she could even play any song after hearing it on the radio!

I doubted it. How could she know F# or Eb just by *hearing* it? An ear like that would open up unlimited possibilities for any musician.

It bothered me. Did she *really* have Perfect Pitch? "Yes," she told me casually.

Perfect Pitch was too good to be true. I rudely asked, "Can I test you sometime?"

"OK," she said cheerfully.

Now I was going to make her eat her words...

I carefully picked a time when Linda had not been listening to music. Then I challenged her to name tones for me—by ear.

I made her stand so she could not see the piano keyboard. I made sure other classmates could not help her. Everything was set just right so I could expose this ridiculous joke.

Nervously, I plotted my testing strategy. Linda appeared serene. With silent apprehension I played a tone: F#. (She'll never guess F#!)

I barely touched the tone. *Instantly* she said, "F#!"

I was astonished.

I quickly played another tone. She didn't stop to think. *Immediately* she announced the correct pitch. I played more and more tones here and there on the keyboard, and each time she knew the answer—without effort. She was SO amazing—she could identify pitches as easily as colors!

"Sing an Eb," I demanded, determined to mess her up. Quickly she sang the proper pitch. I asked for more tones (trying hard to make them increasingly difficult), but she sang every one perfectly on pitch.

I was totally boggled. "How in the world do you do it?" I blurted.

"I don't know," she replied. And that was as much as I could get out of her!

The reality of Perfect Pitch hit me hard. My head was dizzy with disbelief, yet I now knew that Perfect Pitch was real.

I couldn't figure it out...

"How does she do it?" I kept asking myself. On the other hand, why can't *everyone* identify tones by ear?

It dawned on me that most musicians go their entire lives without knowing C from C#, or G major from F major. That's like an artist who paints picture after picture without knowing green from orange. It seemed odd and contradictory.

I found myself even more mystified than before I had tested her.

Humiliated and puzzled, I went home to work on this problem. At age 14, this was a hard nut to crack.

You can be sure I tried it myself. I would sweet-talk my brothers and sisters into playing tones for me, then try to determine each pitch. Almost every attempt failed miserably.

I tried day after day to learn the tones. I tried to visualize the location of each pitch. I tried playing them over and over in order to memorize them. But



nothing worked. I simply could not recognize the tones by ear. It was hopeless.

After weeks in vain, I finally gave up. Linda's gift was extraordinary. But for me, it was out of reach.

Then came the realization...

It was like a miracle. And it happened all because I had stopped *trying* so hard. I had stopped *straining* my ear and started to listen NATURALLY. Then the incredible secret to Perfect Pitch jumped right into my lap.

I began to notice faint "colors" within the tones. Not *visual* colors—but colors of *pitch*. They had always been there. But this was the first time I had ever really "let go" enough to hear these *pitch colors* which reside in every tone.

Now I could name pitches by ear! It was simple. An F# sounded one way—a Bb had a distinctly different sound. It was as easy as naming red or blue.

The realization struck me: THIS IS PERFECT PITCH! This is how Bach, Beethoven and Mozart could mentally hear music on a page—and identify tones, chords, and keys at will—by *listening to these pitch colors*. It's that simple!

I became convinced that *any* musician could have Perfect Pitch by just knowing this secret of "color hearing."

When I first told my close friend Ann, she laughed. "Oh, I could never have Perfect Pitch," she asserted. "You can develop a good *Relative Pitch* [the ability to compare one tone with another], but you have to be *born* with Perfect Pitch."

"That's because you don't understand what Perfect Pitch is," I said. "It's easy!"

I showed her the secret and she heard it *immediately*. Soon she too could name any tone and sing any pitch requested. We became instant celebrities. Everyone was amazed.

As a keyboardist, Perfect Pitch allowed me to progress faster than I ever thought possible. I completely skipped over required college courses. Perfect Pitch made *everything* easier—performing, composing, arranging, transposing, improvising—and it skyrocketed my enjoyment as well. Music is definitely a *hearing* art.

Of course, music professors were highly skeptical when I started teaching Perfect Pitch years later. Most would laugh at the mere *suggestion* that anyone could have Perfect Pitch. But when I showed them how to hear the pitch colors *themselves*, they changed their tune!

Now there's more proof...

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spirit of collectivism and genre smashing that Carla Bley embodied with her 1970 epic *Escalator Over the Hill*. That album was a seed for new music and New York's downtown scene; this is a hardy, delayed blossom. It comes not five minutes too early. — Josef Woodard



THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

Dreams
(Polydor/PolyGram)

WITH THE SUCCESS of boxed sets by Bob Dylan and Eric Clapton, as well as the emergence of the CD, record companies have been raking their vaults in search of suitable candidates for

this kind of canonization. The results have ranged from the sublime (like the above) to the ridiculous (*20 Years of Jethro Tull*, anyone?). *Dreams* fits somewhere in between.

Back in 1970, the Allmans were the hottest thing in rock, set to peak artistically with *Idlewild South*, the live *At Fillmore East* double-set and the two-record *Eat a Peach*, just three songs of which were recorded before Duane Allman's death at the end of 1971. Their brand of southern-fried blues and soul, filtered unabashedly through the electricity of the British Invasion, set off a string of so-called boogie bands, most notably Lynyrd Skynyrd.

This massive six-LP/four-CD/four-cassette, 55-track compilation, weighing in at over five hours, is a tribute to the scholarship of PolyGram's catalog whiz Bill Levenson (who also put together Clapton's successful *Crossroads*), and includes more than two hours of "rare or previously unreleased material." The volume proceeds in chronological order, from Gregg and Duane's Anglo-influenced Allman Joys in 1966 to Gregg Allman's 1988 solo album, *Just Before the Bullets Fly*.

The standard critical take on the All-

mans was that they weren't quite the same after motorcycle accidents a year apart took the lives of Duane and bassist Berry Oakley. *Dreams* bears out that assessment, petering out after a promising start. Previously unavailable Allman Joys demos, including the Yardbirds' "Shapes of Things," show just how important a role English rock played in Gregg and Duane's musical development, while a version of "Morning Dew" by the 31st of February circa '68 (with Gregg and Duane joined by drummer Butch Trucks) is another curiosity worthy of unearthing. Other highlights include a 1970 live "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town" from a Cincinnati concert and a 1971 radio performance of the "You Don't Love Me"/"Soul Serenade" medley, dedicated by Duane to his old sessionmate King Curtis. Most of the rest are remixes that don't add much to the originals, and in some cases aren't as good.

The final half of *Dreams*, like the Allmans' career, seems to be an attempt to recapture the spark of incendiary jams like the immortal "Whipping Post" and "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed." The one revelation is Gregg Allman's incredi-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 69

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VARIOUS ARTISTS

Bali (Nonesuch Explorer)

ANYONE WHO GREW UP WITH THE NONE-such Explorer series remembers David Lewiston's classic (though acoustically limited) collections of Balinese gamelan music. Although some of that vintage stuff has been reissued on CD, Lewiston recently went back to the source for a set of all-digital recordings, returning with a sampler of astonishing clarity and presence. But *Bali* doesn't just add luster and detail to the gamelan's sonic palette; it also offers a valuable look at how this very vital folk music—particularly the kecak “Monkey Chant”—has evolved over the last two decades.

ANDERSON, BRUFORD, WAKEMAN, HOWE

Anderson Bruford Wakeman, Howe (Arista)

TRUE, WE NEED A NEW YES THE WAY DON-ald Trump needs another yacht. But at least this is occasionally amusing—Howe keeps each solo under 1,000 notes, Wakeman thinks he's Franz Liszt only about half the time (otherwise, he's George Winston), Bruford has finally discovered the backbeat, and Anderson offers his version of street slang.

MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER

State of the Heart (Columbia)

ON THE SURFACE, CARPENTER MIGHT SEEM typical of the new breed of Nashville acts—understated, folk-inflected vocals, a slick-picking country band and songs that could easily go either way. Go deeper, though, and Carpenter proves a real find, a writer of unusual perception and depth who can take something as commonplace as old clothing and find within it a song as wonderfully evocative as “This Shirt.”

KON KAN

Move to Move (Atlantic)

SO WHAT IF THIS RECORD IS FRIVOLOUS, derivative, even silly—since when is dance music supposed to be profound?

Fact is, any moron can steal from “White Lines (Don't Do It)” or “The Tide Is High”; it takes true talent to turn such theft into the kind of trashy fun Kon Kan delivers in “Harry Houdini” and its ilk.

MILTON NASCIMENTO

Miltos (Columbia)

LIKE HIS CLASSIC '70S RECORDINGS, THIS succeeds not simply because it attempts to approximate the excitement of rock 'n' roll with traditional Brazilian instruments, but because it's willing to settle for that approximation. In other words, from the dreamy cadences of “River Phoenix” to his radical rethink of “La Bamba,” Nascimento does what he does best: He sounds like himself.

BAD ENGLISH

Bad English (Epic)

GRAMMAR IS THE LEAST OF THEIR PROBLEMS.

STUART HAMM

Kings of Sleep (Relativity)

EVEN THOUGH HAMM SEEMS TO THINK “POP music” refers to the way a bassist handles his strings, there's something oddly insinuating about the fusoid instrumentals collected here. Part of it may be the sheer drive of Hamm's slap-and-pop approach; he hammers his way through “Black Ice” as if he forgot there *was* a drummer on the date. Still, it's the quiet magnificence of his solo performances (for instance, the stunning “Prelude in C”) which suggest that Hamm is the sort of virtuoso for whom musicality matters more than technique.

SOUL II SOUL

Keep On Movin' (Virgin)

THIS BRITISH COMBO DESCRIBES ITSELF AT one point not as a band but as a “sound system,” and rightly so. Not only does Soul II Soul share the dub culture's fondness for heavy bass and grooves that matter more than melody, but the music this ensemble makes has more to do with sampling and sound manipulation than instrumental dexterity. Still, that doesn't stop them from *playing* like a

band, as the thickly layered James Brown funk of “Fairplay” shows, nor does it compromise the sweet soul singing that animates almost everything else.

MR. BIG

Mr. Big (Atlantic)

EVERYBODY REMEMBERS WHAT HAPPENED when Sammy Hagar replaced David Lee Roth in Van Halen. Imagine the result if Mr. H. kicked David Lee out of his *own* band, and you've got the sound of Mr. Big. Granted, singer Eric Martin isn't quite as brassy as Hagar, but he more than makes up in attitude and upper register, just as Paul Gilbert compensates for lacking Steve Vai's chops by having better ideas. But this band's top man is actually on the bottom, for this is where we finally hear what Billy Sheehan can do. Frankly, the wait was worth it.

WATERFRONT

Waterfront (Polydor)

WHAM! SHAM, NO THANK YOU MA'AM.

DR. LICKS

Standing in the Shadows of Motown (Hal Leonard Books)

CONSIDERING HOW CRUCIAL JAMES JAMESON's basslines were to many Motown classics, it's a shame so few outside the Hitsville studio ever knew his name. This bio-cum-transcription book not only tells the story, it spells out what was important about his playing, from his revolutionary use of harmony and time to his keen sense of song structure. But don't read it as being for bass players alone; thanks to the all-star performance tapes, anyone can come away from this book with a better understanding of Motown's bottom line.

JACKSON BROWNE

World in Motion (Elektra)

WERE JACKSON BROWNE ABLE TO INFUSE his political numbers with the intensely personal passion that animates his love songs, he might be able to put a world in motion. Instead, he sounds like something out of a Doonesbury cartoon—Jimmy Thudpucker with a CNN feed.

BY J.D. CONSIDINE



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**RALPH MOORE***Images* (Landmark)

A STUNNING LEAP FORWARD FOR A TENOR saxophonist who for a time seemed likely to be the Hank Mobley of his generation: that is, sturdy, gifted, a sideman for everybody, a leader on record only and a musician familiar with understatement. The understatement is still there, but so is a sense of contrast, where he'll bomb the bass, spiral into the ether of a tenor's high range. The rhythm section—Benny Green on piano, Peter Washington on bass and Kenny Washington on drums—sounds like jazz musicians instead of jazz students. This is all to say it's possible to make a mainstream record, unpretentious and honest and with a sense of narrative, with an individual voice. In times of corrupt aesthetics and shameless simulation, this isn't so bad.

VARIOUS ARTISTS*After the Riot at Newport*
(Bear Family/Sunshine)

THIS REISSUE WILL MAKE COLLECTORS who've sold their daughters to Arab slavers to make payments for the original weep. They shouldn't have spent the money anyway, because aside from the historical interest—recorded after the 1960 riot—and the oddity of moment, when George Wein brought up a handful of country musicians (Chet Atkins, Boots Randolph, Brenton Banks, Floyd Cramer on piano and Bob Moore and Buddy Harman on bass and drums) up north to play bebop, there's not much to recommend. Except the continual brilliance of guitarist Hank Garland, who has four dense solos on the record. Garland, who is still alive but brain damaged as the result of a car accident, was one of the most gifted jazz guitarists ever, even though he made a living in the Nashville studio scene. He recorded the occasional jazz album—after this, he made the often incredible *Jazz Winds from a New Direction*—and he wasn't a bad talent scout either; both LPs feature 17-

year-old Gary Burton. (508 Colorado Ave., Stuart, FL 34994.)

ALVIN BATISTE*Bayou Magic* (India Navigation/Rounder)

THERE ARE MISTAKES ON THIS RECORD. Great. It means someone, somewhere, is trying to break out of the jazz school mold and take risks. Batiste, an influential New Orleans teacher, is often more adventurous than musicians from that city decades younger. From the drums and clarinet ostinato of "Imp and Perry" to standards, Batiste is always trying new things. Clarinet, if played badly, can sound like the kazoo; in his hands, it has a rich languor that, even floating through the patterns of fourths that give his playing a modernist angularity, sounds relaxed and inventive.

VARIOUS ARTISTS*New Orleans Sessions 1950*
(Bear Family/Down Home)

LIKE MANY COMPANIES IN THE '40s AND '50s, Mercury led a raid down to New Orleans to record people: Theard Johnson, George Miller and his Mid Driffs, Little Joe Gaines and Dwine Craven, plus Professor Longhair. This is an every-other compilation: Every other tune rocks, with boogie piano peeking out from under the riffs. But here's the thriller: Amid the muck, there are a handful of unreleased Longhair tracks which are his best playing ever recorded. Eccentric and brilliant, his work always seemed laden with the promise of greater technical achievements. Here it is, steely fingers banging away at the blues, seemingly throwing quotes at random. Incredible stuff, and maybe worth the price of import admission. (10341 San Pablo, El Cerrito, CA 94530.)

VARIOUS ARTISTS*Deep in the Heart of Texas*
(Home Cooking/Down Home)

SOUL IS ONE OF THE GREAT GENERIC STYLES that either you understand or don't. The

sound of gospel melodies put to secular use over a steaming rhythm section is one of the great American sounds, and this collection, including the great Gashead, Ernie K-Doe, O.V. Wright, etc., provides the lithium necessary to cope. Mostly recorded in the '70s, so you can hear the sort of shining technique that always accompanies a genre at the end of its life.

**ROBERTO MUSCI/
GIOVANNI VENOSTA***Loa Hi Tech Corporation*
(Re Records/NMDS)

IN A BAD MOOD, I'D SAY THAT THIS WAS ambient music stink for half-wits. But I'd be wrong. These two guys have constructed well thought-out pieces from samples of music, usually from Africa. They gave the pieces structure by adding guitar and keyboard parts. The results are funky and pastoral, a bit airy, and are always carefully glued together for musical effect. Ten years ago the record would have prompted stereotypical blather about one-worldism and the global village. Today, it doesn't seem naive or hippie-like, just hip. (500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.)

RAOUL BJORKENHEIM*Krakatau Rituals* (KR 1/Hieronymus oy)

THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST RECORDS I'VE heard in a few months, and like lots of things, I don't know where it came from or anything about the players. I know this, though: it's got a great metal grind—Raoul plays guitar—that mixes Ornette with a bit of hardcore and free playing. The saxophonists Jorma Tapio and Tapani Rinne can sound scarily like Ornette, and, harmonized over a John Deere-goes-urban backbeat (two drummers), they ignore soloing in favor of fevered riffing. Raoul likes dense distortion and pig-howling sounds; it all finds its place. Finns give good rhythm, I guess. Another little-known fact. (P1 470, 33101 Tampere, Finland.)

BY PETER WATROUS

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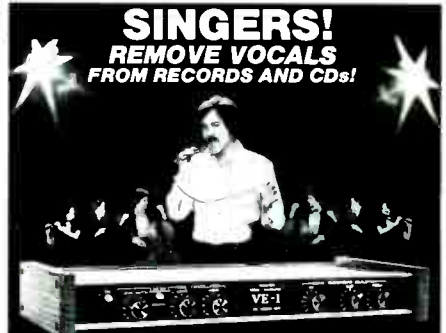
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JAZZ CDs from page 20
to sell for around \$10-\$11, while Columbia's are \$13-\$14.

This being jazz, it is axiomatic that whatever is being done with the music isn't going to be agreed upon in the jazz community. If one person likes to hear Fats Waller in a set of piano solos and vocals with his band, another is going to complain that it should have been just piano solos. It's easy to overlook the bottom line: that recorded jazz of all

generations is more available. "Anything they can do to get the music out is admirable," declares critic Leonard Feather. "The reissues of today have better sound," Nat Hentoff points out. "The historiography is more thorough."

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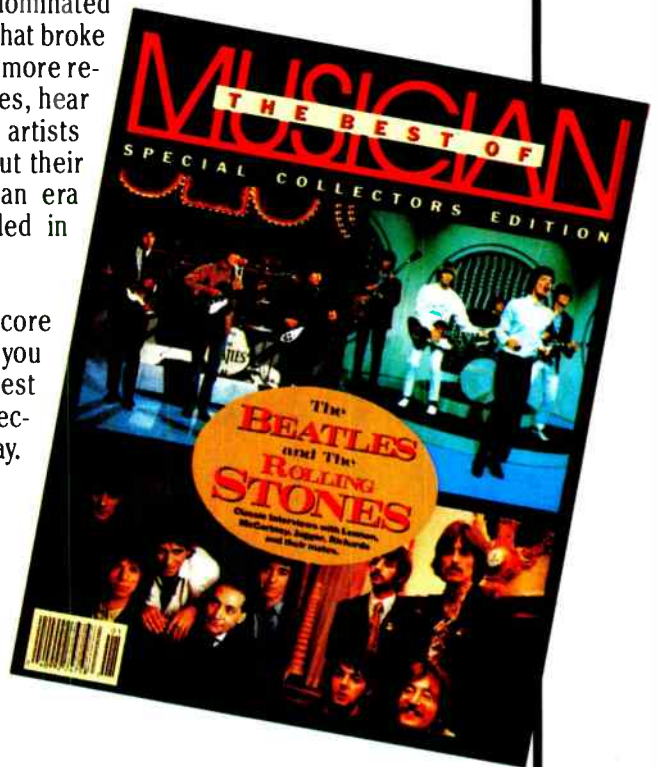
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THE MUSICIAN GUIDE

To Understanding Rock Star Interviews



IN THE LAST 13 years, *Musician* has run over two thousand interviews with rock stars, jazz greats and music biz bigwigs. In that time we have become fluent in a language as encoded as any diplomatic dialect, as arcane as the most specialized rhetoric of science or academia. While many of our regular readers are conversant in this professional talk, it has come to our attention that some casual magazine buyers are confused by what our subjects *mean* by certain key phrases that pop up in interview after interview. Therefore, in the interest of breaking down the walls of confusion and inducting a general audience into an exclusive fraternity, we present here, for you to clip and save, this series of translations.

When rock stars say... They really mean...

I couldn't care less about my image.	I've got a \$5,000 a month publicist, photo approval and a hair weave.
Music isn't about how fast you play.	I've got rotten chops.
I never read the critics.	The critics hate me.
I don't believe in mixing politics with music.	I voted for Bush.
That's a really good question!	I have a pat answer.
Off the record...	I want you to take the blame for saying this.
That's completely untrue!	Who the hell told you?
I don't bother about the business side.	I've got a great accountant.
That's a very interesting story...	It will take me half an hour to tell it.
The producer ruined my last record.	My last record bombed.
You've got to try new things.	My last two records bombed.
This time I wanted to get back to basics.	My last three records bombed.
You're the first one who ever caught that.	What a stupid interpretation.
He's quite eccentric.	He's quite a jerk.
I will never endorse a product.	No one's asked me.
Bruce is a nice guy.	What's so wonderful about <i>him</i> anyway?
<i>Musician</i> has really gone downhill.	They won't give me the cover.
I hate doing interviews.	Here comes the media blitz.
I don't care about money.	I'm already rich.
I wanted to try mixing different styles.	I wanted to rip off somebody else.
I've said this before...	I've said this in five interviews this week.
I'm not a folkie.	I'm a folkie.
That label knows nothing about selling records.	They dropped me.
I refuse to make videos.	I'm ugly.
I'll have the lobster.	You're buying.

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