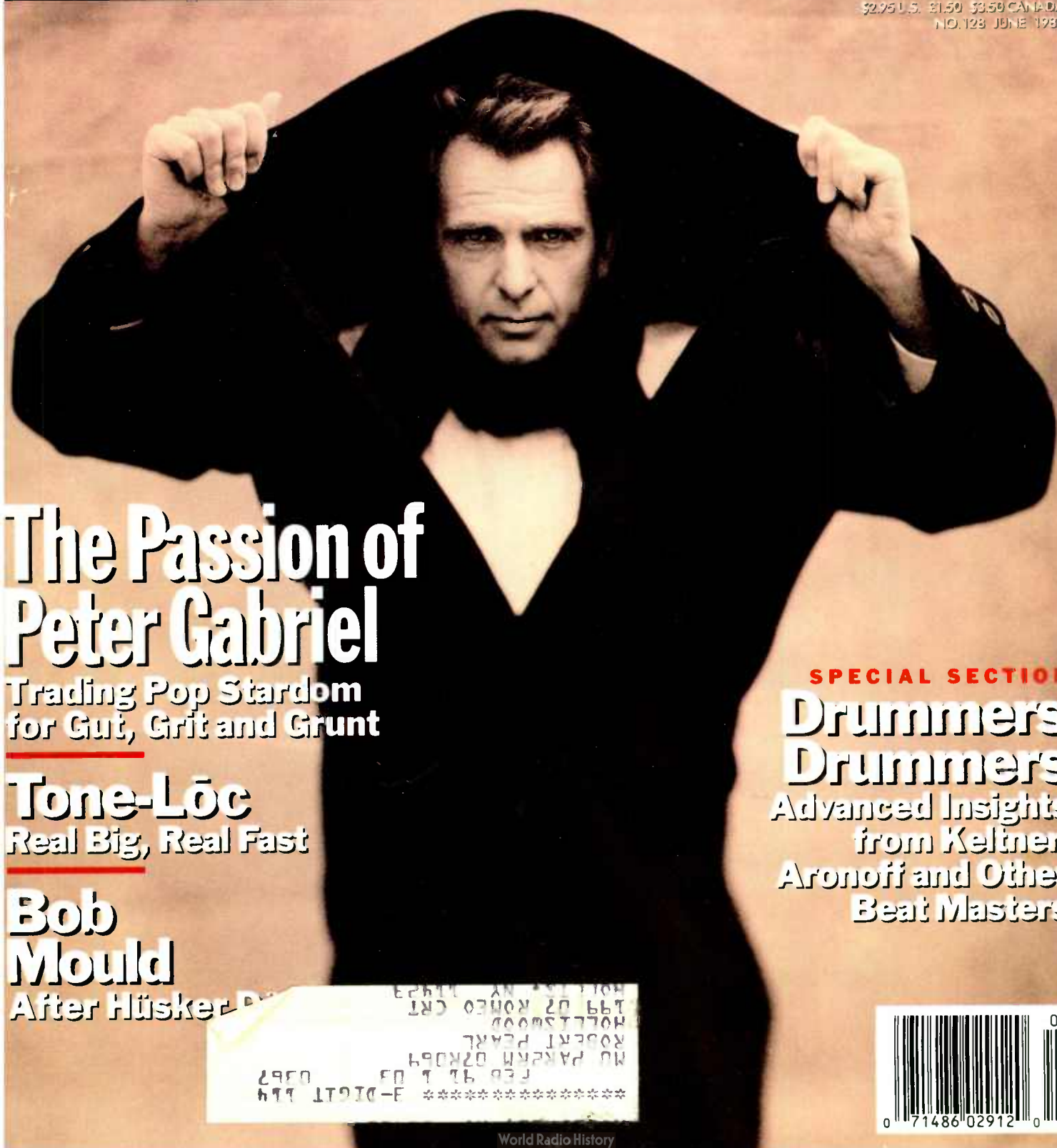


# MUSICIAN

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NO. 123 JUNE 1989



## The Passion of Peter Gabriel

Trading Pop Stardom for Gut, Grit and Grunt

## Tone-Lōc

Real Big, Real Fast

## Bob Mould

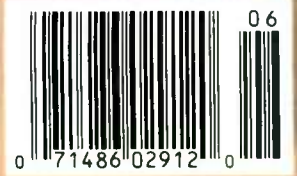
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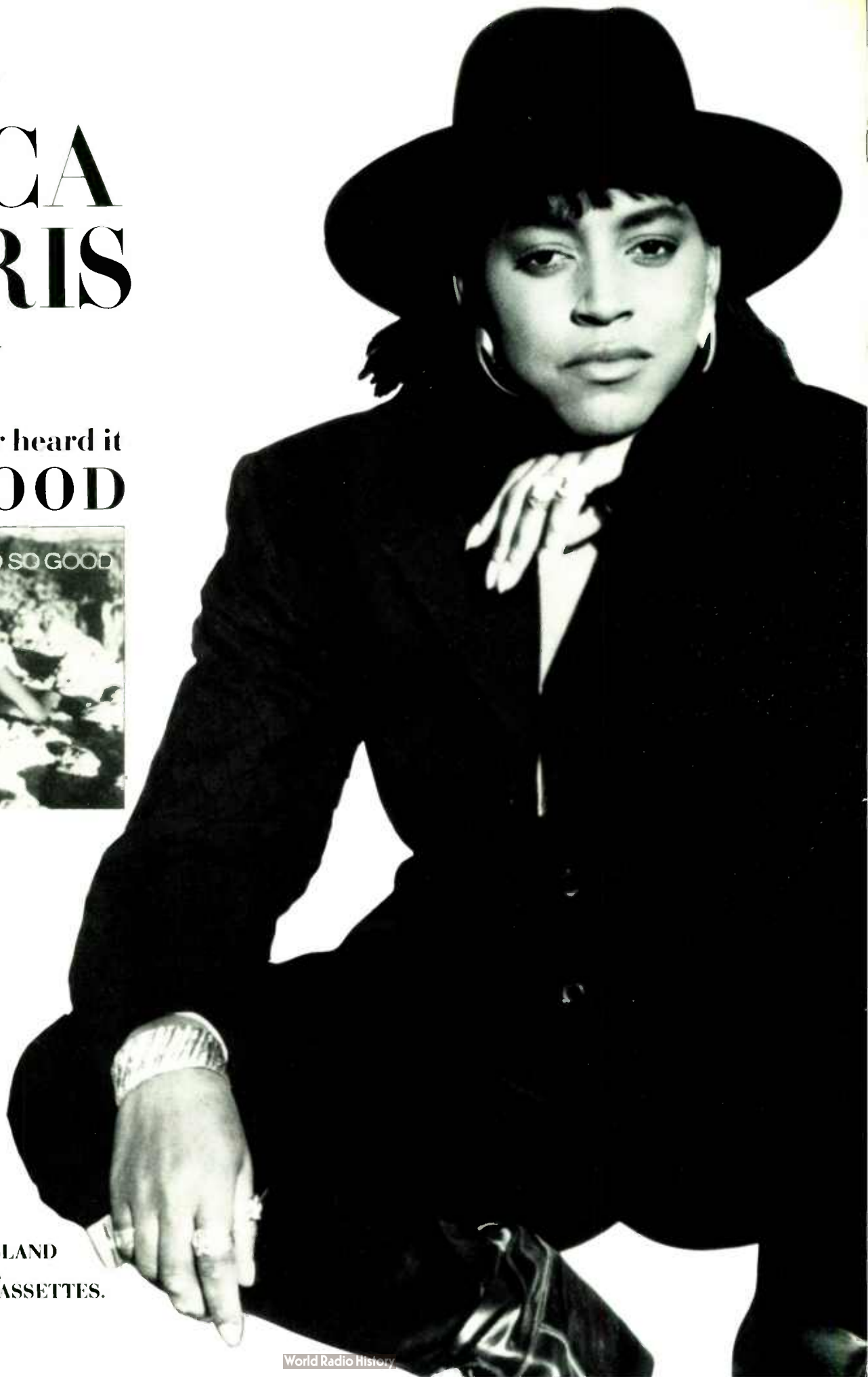




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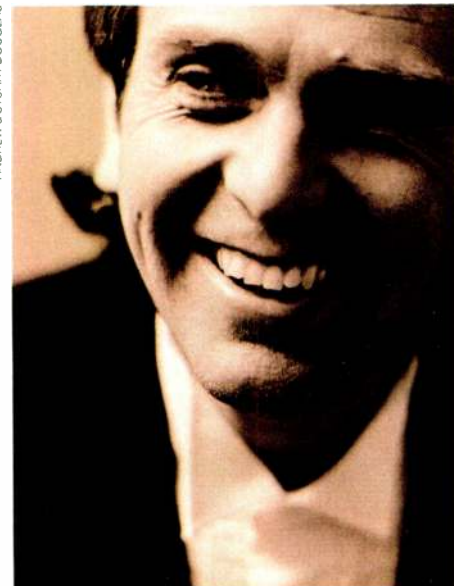
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COVER PHOTO BY  
ANDREW &  
STEWART DOUGLAS



ANDREW & STUART DOUGLAS

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A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION      JUNE 1989      NO. 128

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JOCK BAIRD  
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BILL FLANAGAN  
**SENIOR EDITOR**  
SCOTT ISLER  
**PACIFIC EDITOR**  
MARK ROWLAND  
(213) 273-7040  
**MUSIC PROJECTS EDITOR**  
ALAN DI PERNA  
**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**  
TED DROZDOWSKI  
**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**  
J.D. CONSIDINE VIC GARBARINI  
JOHN HUTCHINSON JIM MACNIE  
STEVE PERRY STAN SOOCHER  
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**TYPOGRAPHY**  
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**MAIN OFFICE/PRODUCTION/  
RETAIL SALES**  
33 COMMERCIAL ST  
GLOUCESTER MA 01931-0701  
(508) 281-3110  
**NEW YORK ADVERTISING/EDITORIAL**  
MUSICIAN, 1515 BROADWAY, 39TH FL.  
NEW YORK, NY 10036 (212) 536-5208  
**CIRCULATION MANAGER**  
JIMMY HALL  
**CIRCULATION DIRECTOR**  
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World Radio History



# With nine work stations of we'd like to introduce



Forgive us if we sound a little pompous. It's just we find ourselves in a curious position. Over the past several years, everyone and their brother has introduced a so-called "work station." When, to our way of thinking, they really aren't work stations at all.

To us, a work station should have the most sophisticated sequencer available. And in fact, our new W-30 does. It features 16 tracks, microscope editing, full compatibility with both Roland MicroComposers and Directors "S" Sequencing software, to say nothing of the friendliest user interface there is.

To us, a work station should also be designed around a sampler rather than a synthesizer. What this does, more than anything else, is make the system remarkably versatile. It's a whole lot easier to make a sampler sound like a synthesizer than the reverse. And speaking of sounds, those from the W-30

can be processed through either eight polyphonic outputs or a mix output.

To us, a work station should possess an excellent memory. Which is why we've equipped the W-30 with a one mega-



*Because the W-30 uses the same disks as the S-50 and S-550, you won't need to build a sound library. It already exists.*



# In the market, the first.



byte, user-accessible memory (ROM).

And because it comes with the most frequently-used sounds, you won't need to load in a sound disk to begin working.

The sampler section's 512k (RAM) memory is no less impressive. It's actually equal to that of a Roland S-330, and can be used for creating new sounds, or for playback, or for manipulating any of the S-Series disks. As a result, you'll not only be in a position to work with the sounds that are currently hot, you'll be in just as good a position to capture the sounds that will become hot.

Nor does its versatility end here, because the Roland W-30 not only puts



*If you squint you can probably make out the fact that the new Roland W-30 has eight polyphonic individual outputs which allow any sound to be routed individually to a mixer.*

a 3.5" floppy disk drive at your disposal, it also gives you the ability to access additional data by using either a CD-ROM or a hard disk connected to an optional SCSI interface.

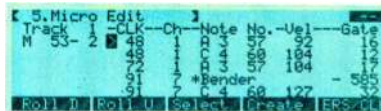
Of course, a work station should be able to express itself too. Which is why we've made our 61-note keyboard sensitive to both velocity and after-touch.

And it should be easy to use. Hence, the W-30 uses a large, state-of-the-art 240 x 60 dot LCD display that's capable of providing more useful information at one time than ever before.

But before we go, let us take this moment to pose a hypothetical ques-



*Our state-of-the-art 240 x 60 dot LCD display lets you view all the parameters while editing.*



*While sequencing you can change the length or dynamic value of any note simply by using microscope editing.*

tion. Let's just say that all of the other so-called work stations found a way to include these very same fea-

tures. They'd be better, of course, but still not comparable to the re-

markable new W-30. Because they'd still be missing the most persuasive and motivating feature of all.

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**ELVIS IS BACK!**

ELVIS COSTELLO (MAR. '89) IS still one of the true talents in music today. And after 14 albums his music is still miles above most. No thanks to American radio stations, who have been no friend to him. But thanks to *Musician* for a revealing interview.

Robert Shivner  
Franklin, OH

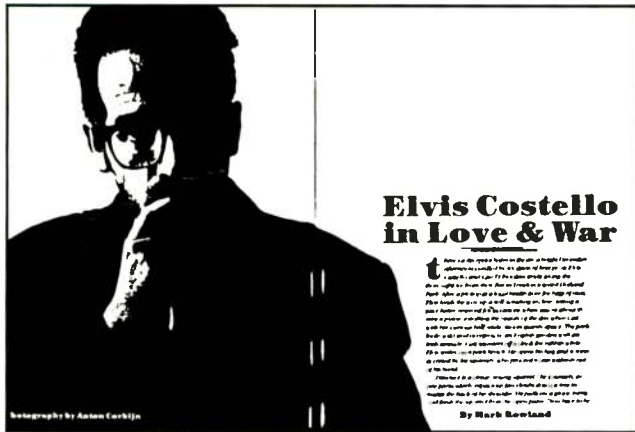
THERE MUST BE SOME JUSTICE left in the world if, through the haze of the Top 40, the true talents are still recog-

laborating with St. T-Bone and whining about how he's "never been part of any... community."

Time to pack it in, Declan. You've lost it, and you're making some of us wonder if you ever had it. Maybe if you changed your name to Geraldo Downey...

Simon Grabowski  
Detroit, MI

IT'S ONE THING TO BE JUST another trophy on a crowded wall; it's quite another to allow one's image to be used



nized. Thank you for the wonderful article on the master of rhetoric!

Alyssa May  
Piedmont, CA

IT'S INTERESTING TO NOTE HOW Elvis Costello's put-downs of other artists apply to his own career. He doesn't have "anything more to add," "he's just trotting it out because people have swallowed the myth," "the light went out of [his] eyes and it hasn't come back," "it's pretty soulless," "a fatal attack of show business" and "it makes [him] look ridiculous."

The truth is, Elvis hasn't made a decent record since '82. In an attempt to cover up his total lack of decent output since then, he's spent his time bouncing from style to style without a clue of what he's doing, changing his name, changing it back, col-

as a smug reminder of one huge record label taking over the world as we know it.

Business is business, and I applaud Warner Bros. for having the good sense to sign Elvis Costello. I have a hard time, however, being amused with the cover art of *Spike*. While Warner Bros. and Costello laugh their respective ways to the bank, I'll mourn a loss of sensibility and sensitivity in "the beloved entertainer."

J.C. Porter  
Dallas, TX

IS MARK ROWLAND'S COMMENT that Elvis Costello "doesn't mind calling a spade a spade" alluding to the man's infamous Ray Charles statement? Jeez, let sleeping dogs lie. Bravo on an intriguing and literate interview.

Dan Franke  
Milwaukee, WI

**BOBBY: NOT GOOD**

BO! THAT DAVID (SIC) MACNIE is one blind writer, father! I mean, cash it out: The house-boy can write! His story on Bobby Brown (Mar. '89), that bunky dude who took hop-hip to number one, was old billin' to the max! And Macnie really has sidewalk credibility. He really knows his chives-talk. Now how about a story on Paula Abdul? Bird.

Percy Upton-Bishop  
Grosse Pointe Shores, MI

YOU MADE BOBBY BROWN OUT to be the mastermind behind the chart-topping album *Don't Be Cruel*, and L.A. & Babyface just a couple of producer/engineers taking orders.

To set things straight, Brown only co-wrote one of his three hit singles ("My Prerogative"). The other two ("Don't Be Cruel," "Roni") were both written and produced by the very talented songwriting/production team of L.A. & Babyface.

There's a very big difference between someone like Brown and someone like Prince, a true genius.

Johnny V  
Oakland, CA

**ROGER IS JUST ALRIGHT**

FINISHING UP THE MARCH '89 issue, I finally read Dave DiMartino's Roger McGuinn article. Suddenly I stumbled across the statement that McGuinn "'accepted' Jesus," and continued reading with trepidation... and surprise!

Bravo! Thank you for treating this man's spiritual beliefs with sensitivity, even if you don't consider them hip. Start doing this with every artist and we'll all be happy!

Jon Gillespie  
Fort Wayne, IN

**BLIND MAN'S BLUFF**

I AM TRYING HARD NOT TO laugh as I imagine the faces of people who live in Oakville reading the Jeff Healey article (Mar. '89). As Oakville has about the third-highest per capita income in all of Canada and doesn't have any really

"scummy" bars, I can't imagine where Jeff played. Also, they would hate to be called a "suburb of Toronto."

Mississauga is also a very fine place with almost no bars to speak of. Perhaps Jeff meant the airport strip, which is considered Malton and is really scummy.

The funniest part, though, is Jeff coming from "Nato-bico." I think you mean Etobicoke.

C. Dawe  
Mississauga, Ont., Canada

**SEEING DOUBLE**

OKAY, SO THE WATERBOYS' *Fisherman's Blues* is a very impressive album, perhaps even their "best... most mature" work (Dave DiMartino, *Musician*, Mar. '89), thanks to bandleader Mike Scott, who "spends as much time subverting as co-opting the folk elements" (J.D. Considine, *Musician*, Feb. '89). Now did it really take two reviews to tell us so?

Suzanne Greenridge  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

**McKENNA'S GOLD**

I'M QUICKLY TIRING OF RECORD reviewer Kristine McKenna. Didn't her mother teach her to say nice things once in a while? Or is she just special? Maybe you should do yourselves a favor and dump McKenna, because we're tired of hearing her dump on everyone else.

Rich Whitaker  
Grand Junction, CO

**NEIL AND US**

Every so often we get a request for information about Neil and Me, the Neil Young biography written by his journalist father Scott Young. (There was a reference to it in our Neil Young profile last June.) The hardcover edition is out of print, but a revised paperback is still available from the Canadian publisher for \$3.95 postpaid. Send a check or money order to McClelland and Stewart, Customer Service, 25 Hollinger Road, Toronto, Ont. M4B 3G2, Canada.



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# FACES

## SCARY IS BEAUTIFUL AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB

IF MARK EITZEL, SINGER/SONG-writer/frontman of American Music Club, hears one more person speculate that he must be this incredibly glum guy, some bleak beast, it will make him—well, *sad*.

"Sure, I write some sad songs," Eitzel concedes. "But I'm not a manic-depressive, and our live shows are not sad affairs—unless we really suck that night. I'm writing sad songs as I think they should be written, with pretty much no holds barred. And therefore people think I'm this manic-depressive, suicidal maniac. And I'm not any of those things."

What he *is*: a truly extraordinary songwriter, one of the best you've probably never heard of. And while we're not looking to jump into the debate over his emotional condition, there's no arguing that Eitzel's songs are rife with despair, loneliness, alienation, unrequited love, regret and other upbeat themes.

Of course, someone giving a cursory listen to the San Francisco quintet's latest LP, *California*, might miss the dark tales altogether for the gentle, dreamy, sometimes downright gorgeous music that usually provides their setting. Eitzel intentionally sets his haunting, often-ugly verbals against the music.

"I'm trying to make a real quality thing," he says. "I want the songs to have a long shelf life, right? So I try to make the music as beautiful as I can, which I think also

makes the song a lot scarier."

But acknowledging that he melds incongruous musical and lyrical elements doesn't begin to address the enormously disparate songs that have resulted since AMC formed in 1984. Or the nearly hilarious range of comparisons those songs have evoked: Pink Floyd, Richard Thompson, Toiling Midgets, Alex Chilton and at least two Neils (Young and Diamond).

Eitzel laughs when this

subject is raised, but allows that "I *have* tried all different kinds of [styles]. Nowadays, though, if my songs fall into a particular thing, they're mostly really quiet. But there are some amazing things we've been compared to; it's really strange."

What's stranger is that even college radio has all but ignored AMC. While Eitzel claims that writing and performing his compositions is its own reward, he occasion-

ally entertains the idea of his work reaching a broader forum: "I do fantasize about them being on the radio. And I do actually think through videos that could be made about them. But when push comes to shove, I realize that probably won't happen, 'cause the stuff I write is just too—weird. It's really *not* weird at all, but it just seems too morose."

Isn't this where we came in? — *Duncan Strauss*



## Back to Back

**Did you know that April was "Back Announcing Month"? Do you know what hack announcing is? Can you name that song you just heard on radio? If you answered no to the last question, you've answered no to the second one as well.**

**In broadcasting, a back announcement identifies a tune immediately after it's been played. Nothing arcane about that. But radio stations increasingly are ignoring this responsibility**

**to the listener (not to mention artist)—whether due to multi-song "sweeps" or a d.j.'s own blithe egotism.**

**The Recording Industry Association of America has had enough of airwave anonymity. And according to a RIAA-commissioned survey, you have too: A telephone poll found that 90 percent of the radio-listening respondents, at least once in the preceding month, heard a song, wanted to know what it was and never found out.**

**In April RIAA representatives contacted radio stations throughout the U.S. to raise consciousness about back announcing. Also doing their part, the National Association of Recording Merchandisers has been circulating petitions to show stations that audiences want to know what they're hearing.**

**Since April is over, consider the above a hack announcement. But the struggle will surely go forward.**

— *Scott Isler*



## CATHOLIC IS BEAUTIFUL

# ALYSON WILLIAMS

BLACK SINGERS COME UP IN black churches, learning their craft by singing gospel. It's a pop music truism, as taken for granted as rock guitars that go crash in the night.

So along comes Alyson Williams with *Raw*, her stunning debut album. On side one she caresses you gently through some ballads from the Anita Baker/Randy Crawford school. On side two she shifts gears so abruptly you get whiplash, hammering with raucous, impolite dance grooves. And you think smugly to yourself, *definitely* born in the black church. Probably even swept up after the service.

And guess what? You're wrong. Williams was raised a Catholic. And when you're a Catholic, she quips, "you don't *sang*, per se. You hymn."

Catholic hymns and jazz. Musically, that's all Williams, a Harlem native and daughter of a jazz bandleader, says she knew coming up. "That [jazz] is what I love and that's what I know about, because that's what I was hearing. I could

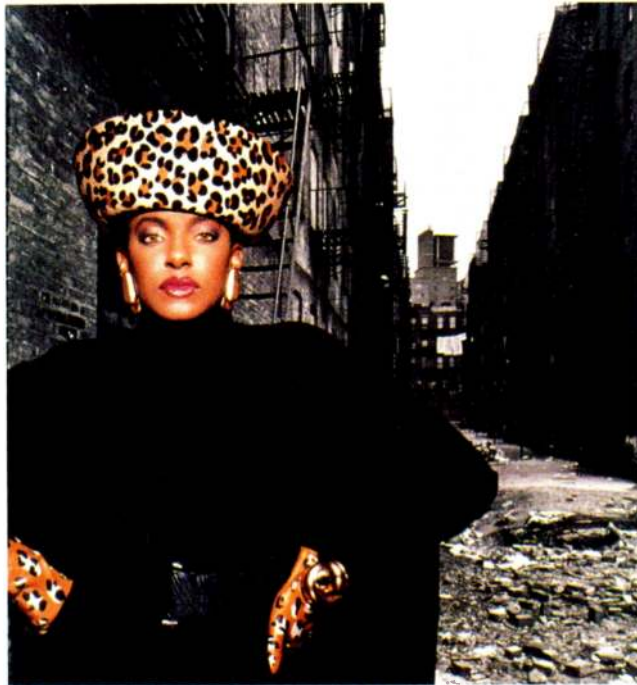
scat before I could riff. I didn't know what a riff was till I was a teenager and I had friends that sang in [the black] church. And I would look at them with astonishment because there were things they were doing with their throat

and with their mouths that I couldn't... like, 'What is down there? Did you *swallow* something?!"

Although a latecomer to the black music mainstream, Williams apparently did a rather good job of "swallowing" the same things. Listening to *Raw*, it's difficult to believe she wasn't weaned on this stuff. But she confirms that's not the case.

"I learned it as I came along," she says. "You know how they say gospel is in all people—especially in black people? That we all have that feeling? That soul? I guess that's true, because it's something that was there.

"There was a long time that I wouldn't touch certain songs. I wouldn't touch blues because I had watched Linda Hopkins and all of these divas sing blues and I knew I didn't know a thing about it. But when that rent was backed up that first time and certain things started happening in my life, and I started to mature... *now* I know how to do that." — Leonard Pitts, Jr.



## BASS IS BEAUTIFUL

# VICTOR BAILEY

ALTHOUGH HIS FIVE-YEAR stint with Weather Report made him a bassist of choice, Victor Bailey is prepared for a backlash against *Bottoms Up*, his first solo album.

"There will be jazz guys who aren't going to like the drum machine and synth on 'Round Midnight,'" he warns. "Then the funk people who might like the groove will hear very *unfunky* horn lines and say, 'This isn't funky.' So I'm prepared for people to love it or hate it."

Differences of opinion, though, are small potatoes compared to the problems Bailey had simply getting the record made. Even during

his Weather Report years, Bailey shopped demos that showed off not only his frisky playing but also his vocal and songwriting chops.

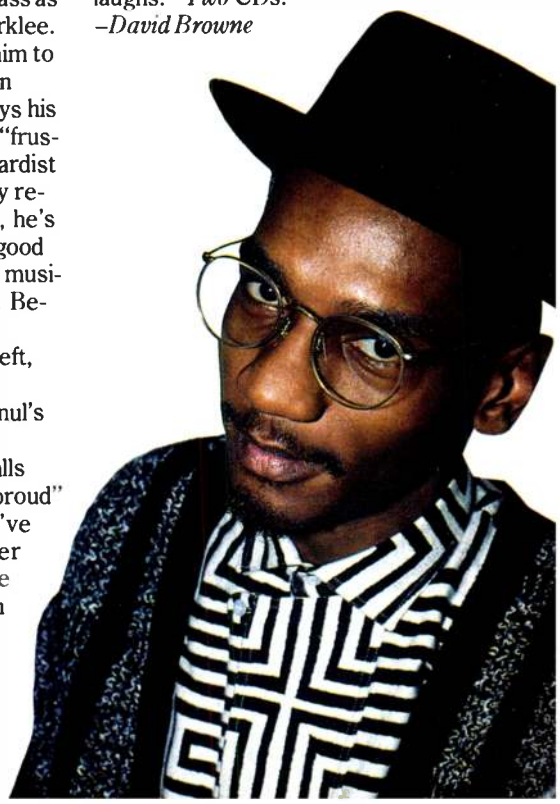
"With a couple of labels, the tapes were sent back unopened," Bailey, 29, recalls, "and through a friend I heard they'd say things like, 'Victor's just a good backup player.' But I'm more than just a bass player. My writing and arranging have been virtually ignored outside of my apartment."

*Bottoms Up* will show those execs what they missed. With the likes of Omar Hakim and Kevin Eubanks anchoring the rhythms, Bailey (on bass, synth and vocals) and horn men Branford Marsalis, Michael Brecker and ex-bandmate Wayne Shorter wail on top. Together they straddle what Bailey calls "jazz and something other than jazz without being commercial."

Born into a musical family—dad Morris wrote songs for the Spinners, Stylistics and other Philly soul acts—Victor took to electric bass as a teen and attended Berklee. In 1982 Hakim tapped him to replace Jaco Pastorius in Weather Report. He says his years in the band were "frustrating" because keyboardist Joe Zawinul consistently rejected his material. But, he's quick to add, "It was a good experience. I became a musician in Weather Report. Before that, I was a bass player." After Shorter left, Bailey stuck around for another year with Zawinul's Weather Update.

These days Bailey calls himself "150 percent proud" of his solo project. "I've been on a million other people's records," he says, "and now I can finally hear what I sound like." And what

of the labels that returned his tapes untouched? "Everybody who did that, I'm gonna send 'em a CD," he laughs. "Two CDs." —David Browne



SUCCESS IS BEAUTIFUL

# NENEH CHERRY

IT'S LUNCHTIME IN LONDON. Neneh Cherry is the lunch. She's got her infant daughter in her arms and... well... the kid's gotta eat.

"'Buffalo Stance' came out in England when I was pregnant," Cherry says, easing into nursing mode. "As the record got bigger, I got bigger. Now that she's here, we've named her Tyson. As in Mike. As in Cicely. She was born on International Women's Day, so we figured we'd better give her a heavy-weight name, you know?"

No surprise. With its rap/hip-hop/everything-including-the-kitchen-sink blend of flavors, Cherry's single is a heavyweight challenge to what's still largely a male domain. There's no coy nonsense or pouting in her spit-fire vocals. On "Buffalo Stance" and Cherry's debut album, *Raw Like Sushi*, the main course is sex. Confident and in control.

Born in Sweden and raised in Brooklyn (home of jazz trumpeter Don Cherry, her stepdad), Cherry spent her late teens commuting between New York and London. Musical friendships led to backup vocals for the Slits and a stint with U.K. cult



faves Rip Rig + Panic, which segued into Float Up CP.

Her recent shift toward a form more calculated to pack dancefloors may be partly a matter of survival; starving isn't fun. Produced by Tim Simenon and Mark Saunders of Bomb the Bass, "Buffalo Stance" was only an experiment, however. The song had been the B-side of an unsuccessful single by Morgan McVey. "It was Tim's idea to redo it," Cherry says. "He's clever. He's into sounds and experimenting. I like what he does, so I trusted him. My

role in the whole thing was to give it spice."

"Buffalo Stance"'s success—top 3 in England—took Cherry by surprise. But she's pleased that her street-wise Americana won points in the U.K., where "many English kids doing hip-hop and rap just emulate what comes from America. They talk about the Bronx, a place they've never *been*."

Attitude-wise, Cherry's roots run deeper than her 10 years in England. Her real father is West African. During a visit there, at 15, she saw

"a different side of female strength. The way African women relate to each other is so straightforward. I had a sense of belonging that was pretty mind-blowing."

Which might not play well on the Brooklyn sidewalks, where even schoolboys think of themselves as God's gift to females.

Cherry laughs. "Most women find that kind of male behavior pretty boring. I guess the message in my music is, 'Please don't give me this, 'cause I'm *smarter* than that.'" — Dan Hedges

## Folkways Records Keeps Ramblin'

The saga of Folkways Records—the label that recorded Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly in the course of documenting the entire planet's music—has entered a new chapter: In March Rounder Records became Folkways' distributor.

Rounder takes over from the Birch Tree Group, which had been distributing Folkways since the Smithsonian Institution acquired the label in April 1987, six months after the death of founder

Moses Asch. Birch Tree had hiked Folkways' list price to \$12.95 "without our knowledge or consent," according to a Smithsonian Folkways employee. Rounder hopes to hold the line at \$9.98.

In his 39 years with Folkways, Asch built a remarkable catalogue. Besides Guthrie and Leadbelly, and Pete Seeger and Ella Jenkins, he issued recordings of jazz, blues, ethnic music from all over the world, spoken word, sound effects and

whatever the hell he felt like. Asch further made a point of never deleting any of Folkways' nearly 2,200 albums. When Asch himself was deleted, the Smithsonian took over. Financial assistance came from Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, U2 and others who donated royalties from the Grammy-winning benefit album *Folkways: A Vision Shared*.

Rounder isn't taking on the entire Folkways corpus, but distributing what it de-

scribes as "several hundred of the faster-selling titles." They are repackaging the albums, revising where necessary Folkways' usually extensive program notes, and issuing the first Folkways compact discs, besides LPs and tapes. What Rounder doesn't carry will still be available from the Smithsonian's Office of Folklife Programs on cassette via special order.

— Scott Isler





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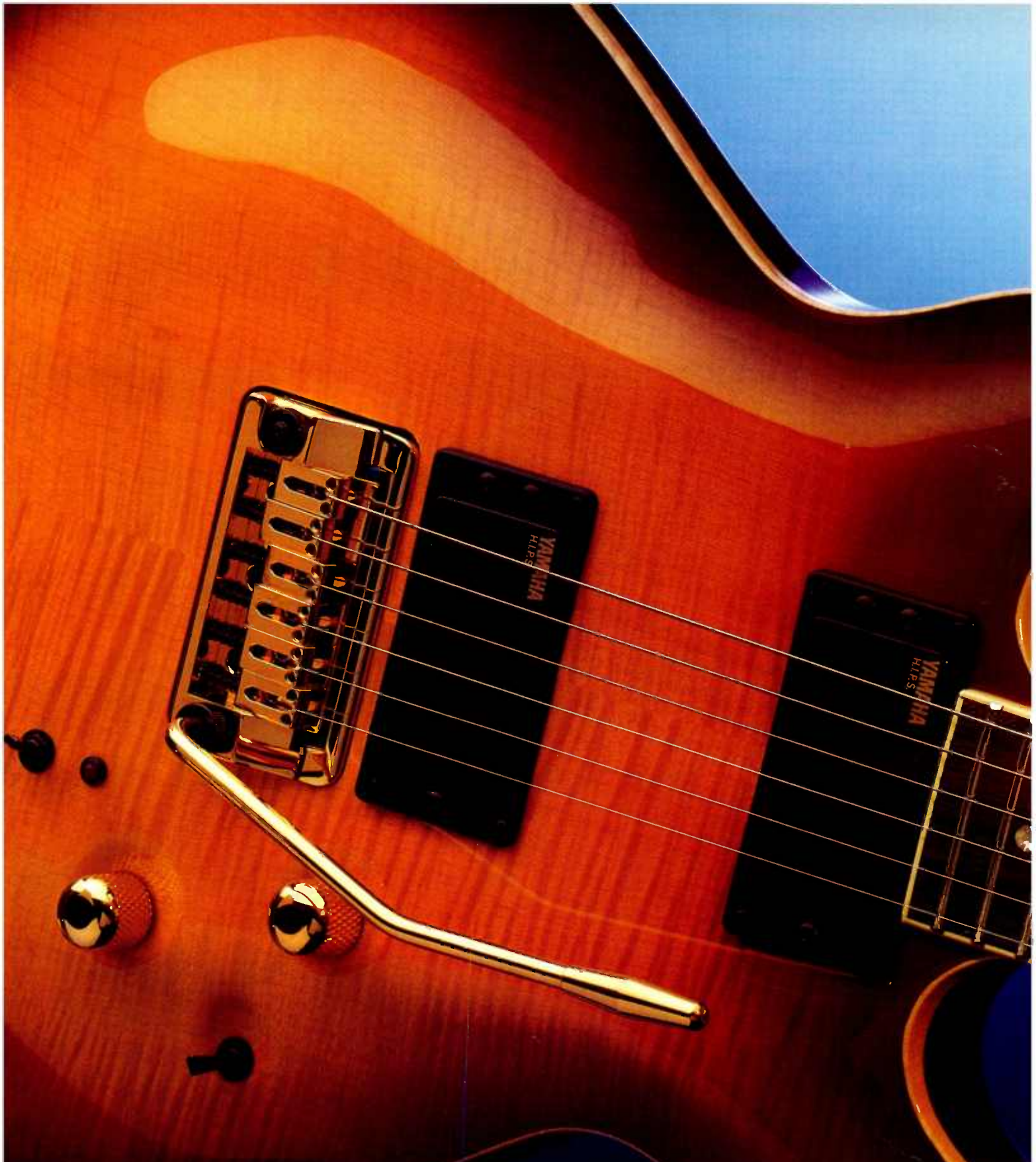
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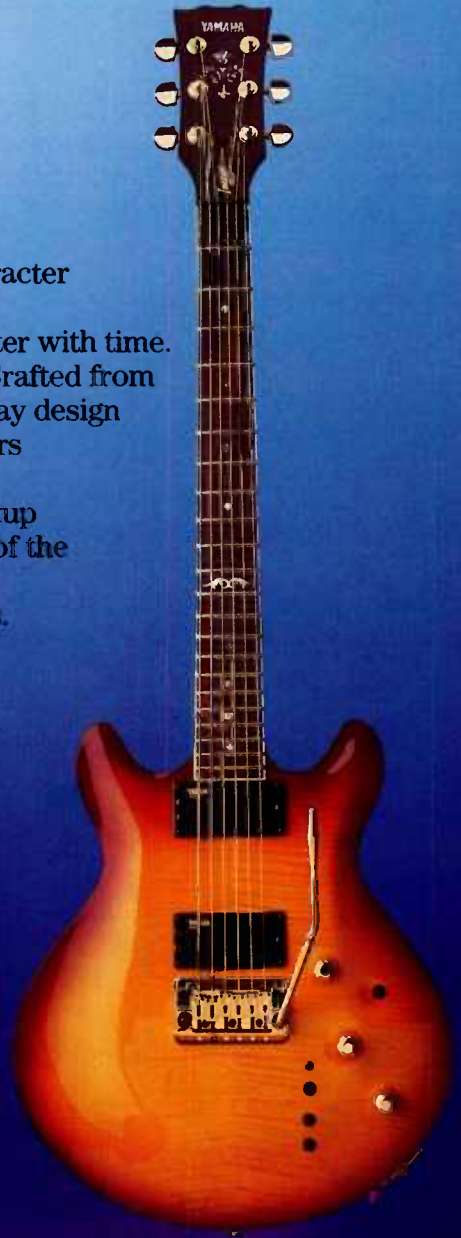
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World Radio History



# TONE- LÔC

To *This Wild Thing*,  
Happiness Is  
a Warm Gun

BY HARRY ALLEN



**E**DDIE MURPHY MOVES smoothly, silently, *most* suavely behind the object of his desire, and drapes a red woolen cape around the woman's shoulders, giving her body the warmth he himself longs to share. He sits down on the swing next to her, his body upright, at attention, holding two glasses and a bottle of champagne in his hands.

"Yo, Orlando," I cut in on this tender moment, just as Tone-Lôc walks into Room 8-T of New York's Southgate Hotel. Tone's road manager looks up at both my question and his arriving charge. "Tone says he's seen this movie 35 or 40 times. Tone," I redirect, "you've seen this movie 40 times?"

"Easy," he says in that Mississippi-mudfunky Texas baritone, the drawl and attack of which has increasingly fascinated me.

I decide to test Tone. "If you're gonna hang out with me," says Lisa McDowell/actress Shari Headley, "you gotta loosen up, Akeem."

"What's the next line, Tone?" I quiz.

Lôc stares at the TV for a second. "Oh, I could be loose."

Murphy, Lôc's favorite movie actor, drops one shoulder into a slump and smiles a goofy smile. "I can be loose," Murph mimics.

Repetition, it's been said, gives depth to meaning. It can also give depth to boredom. And while the boredom of serial hotel rooms might be alleviated by mainlining 40 runs of *Coming to America* (last year's highest-grossing film after *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*), the boredom of having a seemingly infinite number of white journalists asking you the same silly-behind questions might be enough to drive a brother quite mad. *How'd you get your name? Did you expect the record to do this well? How does it feel*

**A hip-hop Hemingway who "might as well keep the ducats rollin'."**

*to have a number-one pop album? How does it feel to have sold three million copies of "Wild Thing"? Blah blah blah blah?*

*Damn. 1. My real name is Tony Smith, and Lôc, short for "loco," is a piece of West Coast gang nomenclature, often affixed in the form of a surname. 2. No. 3. It don't feel like shit. 4. It don't feel like shit.*

Except for the first one, these are exactly the answers Lôc would give to those Four Most Overasked Questions since his single "Wild Thing" hit, and before "Funky Cold Medina," single number two from his number-one album, *Lôc-ed After Dark*, broke. By the time I finally caught up with Tone, on a New York lunch date, he was generally sick of writers. I decided to make up for lost motion by being as little like those damn devils before me as possible. We ate, I laid back and hung out wit' Tone for a day. We went to a club, we went for midnight pizza (a favorite food of his), we checked out *Coming to America*, as stated. And we chilled.

Impressions? Anthony Terell Smith, 23, is basically one o' them bigger-than-life-type characters that step around every now and then. Six-foot-one-and-a-half, 230 lbs. and chock-full of tales, he strongly gives one the impression that he lives rough (his favorite drinks are beer and milk), and that he's done a bit

of everything, or wants to. Sort of like a hip-hop Hemingway.

Tone-Lôc lists his hobbies as rapping and sports. He sucks at pool, but played other sports all of his years growing up: basketball, football, soccer (15 years, he says, and one year professionally, in the early '80s) and boxing, for two years. "I got trophies all over my house," he boasts.

If you really wanna get the man who describes himself as "a country boy at heart" to talk, though, don't hand him a mike. Hand him a firearm. His true passion is hunting and the accumulation of tools for the same. "Oh, I got a gang of 'em. My mom and the fellas call my house 'Weapon City.' I have AK-47s, I have an assortment of rifles, I have shotguns, handguns, um... the AKs have been outlawed... semiautomatics, *grenade launcher...*"

Really?

"Yeah. Shit, you can get anything now." He laughs. "I mainly shoot rifles. Those are my favorite thing to shoot—.410s, Dakotas, those are like the best. Very good, very rare rifles." He goes on to tell the difference between barrel lengths for duck hunting, small-gauge rifles, and one encounter last year with a real live wild thing.

"I shot wolves with an AK-47 last

summer. They were like tearing up the crops in Texas on my great-grandfather's farm—he just died last summer at 103—they were like killing the chickens and shit. You wake up in the morning and there's like this big puddle of chickens and blood. So I was like, 'Okay, they're startin' to come back.'

"So we waited until about 12 at night. It's pitch-black in Texas, so you can hear 'em. This is in east Texas, a part called Timpson. So we turned the light on—*click!*—and there the motherfucker was. He kinda froze. A timber wolf. They're pretty big wolves.

"So we had to tax his ass. We laid him

out. I shot a whole round on him. There're like 30 shots in a round, and I unloaded."

Golly, Tone Capone. Some people are gonna think this is just *slaughter*.

"It's not slaughter," Lōc comes back, a faint smile somewhere near the corner of his mouth *and* mine. "This is *business*. He was tearin' up the chickens, man. He was tearin' up my food and my *eggs*. Business. So I had to let him have it. Know whumsayin'?"

THE SISTER BEHIND the counter at the mid-level-trendy restaurant we stop in sports a hot pink blouse and a natural. As

we enter, the massive crunch of metal playing on the house system is subdued by the pretty funk of "On Fire"'s opening guitars. "Thank you, sweetheart," Lōc says to the smiling woman.

"Do you like that?" I ask, thinking it was a rather obvious overture. "Sure," says Tony. "At least it's better than listenin' to all that Bon Jovi shit."

HANGIN' OUT WITH Lōc at the World, a hole-in-the-wall club in Lower Manhattan. Two white girls compliment home-boy and stare admiringly at 'im, apparently trying to decide how much of that "Wild Thing" rap he's really got goin' on. This scenario is repeated quite a few times that night, and at least three times by this particular duo—in the DJ booth, by the bar, on the dance floor. "Are you tired of this yet?" I ask the entertainer, for one of the few printable exchanges we have in the club that night. "Nah man! As long as they keep throwin' the pussy, I'm wid it."

TONE-LŌC'S LAST day job was computer systems programming for Northrup Aerospace, working on such heavy equipment as F-20 Tigersharks and the like. "I made pretty good money. I made about six-fifty, seven-hundred bring-home a week. That was damn good money for me." He smiles at the memory. "Like, I knew I was *large!* You couldn't tell me shit! You couldn't talk to me. I thought I was a bad motherfucker. I was the one."

The work wasn't bad either. When not moving from area to area troubleshooting, "I used to go in the corners underneath people's desks and go to sleep on the floor and shit. Yeah man, I used to kick it and get paid!"

He quit it to record "On Fire," his first single.

MY SISTER, AN elementary school teacher in Buffalo, has derisively described Tone's work as "hip-hop for Caucasians." Many others in hip-hop, having heard "Wild Thing" and "Funky Cold Medina" forever, have called Tone a sellout, everything short of a con artist, and say his voice is wack.

Lōc wouldn't agree with the fighting words, but he understands them. He himself calls his performances on the two singles "kind of halfhearted."

"That's not my style of rap," he says. However, he admits that he'll probably do another "pop" record for the "pop" people. "Might as well keep the ducats rollin'."

So? Ducats or no, the core audience hasn't given Lōc his due. Now admit-

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Sound Engineer, Def Leppard

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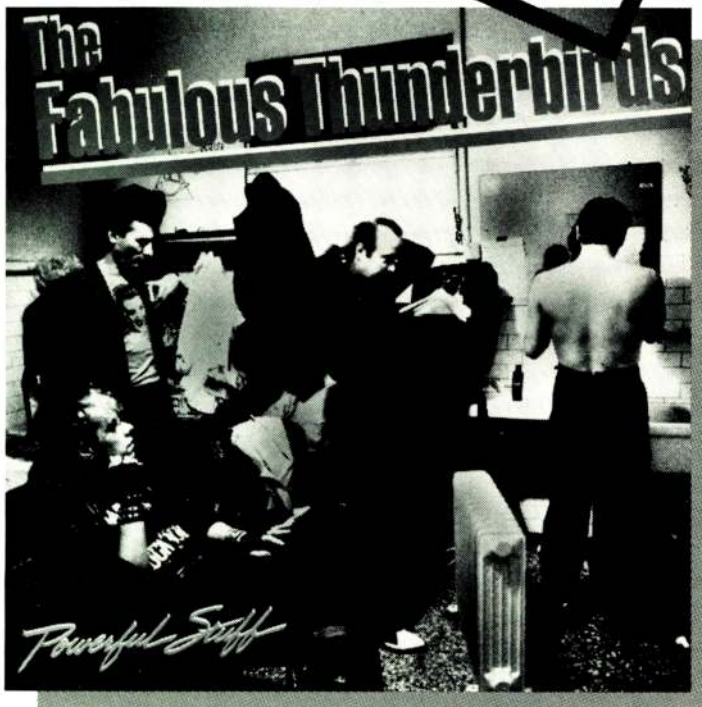
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tedly, if one was put off by Lōc's voice on the singles, you'll hate *Lōc-ed After Dark*. Come on. He starts two cuts by coughing.

But if you're intrigued by Tone and his tone—a commodity that, along with Kid from Kid 'n Play's columnal haircut, is one of hip-hop's true miracles—you'll play his album almost as much as you play your copy of *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick*. See Tone smear his voice all over a groove like he was the craftiest, wickedest peanut butter. Check out D.J. M-Walk as he gets cold-retarded on "Cuttin' Rhythms" and other duzope jams. My favorite line, from "Don't Get Close," said with the gravelly menace and swing that only a brother could muster: "I ain't pullin' no punches, and if you get too close, you might get yo' ass knocked *smoove* the fuck out." And, again, he starts two cuts by coughing. Brothers, my sister, members of the core: This is a funky, lyrically sweet album. In the name of art and Delicious Vinyl owners Matt Dike and Michael Ross' bank accounts, please check it out.

TONE HAS A PIT BULL—his fourth, he says—named Yesca. "It's L.A. slang for 'weed' in Spanish. Hah hah hah hah!"

"I'm not tellin' anybody else to blaze a joint," Lōc says of "Cheeba Cheeba," hip-hop's first blatantly pro-drug message song. He's sitting on the edge of his hotel bed, smiling. "I'm not tellin' nobody else to come on and get high, it's the only way, you gotta smoke weed. I'm just tellin' them that I've *smoked* weed..." *Uh-oh. I can see this is about to go into hip-hop "positivity" p.r. mode.* "No, no, no," I start to laugh. "You're not tellin' 'em you've *smoked* weed."

Tone's been found out and he corrects his story midsentence. "I've *smoked* weed, and I'm *smo-kin'* weed right now, in the middle of this song..."

"And when the record stops, you'll be smokin' more weed," I add, laughing hysterically. Tone's a funny brother. Not that, in 1989, his drug use is less stupid a hobby than drug use has ever been. ("You straight? You straight?" the corner dealers around my way inquire as I daily walk to the train station. "Drugs are killing the black man," I reply.)

"Like, the weed, it's more like a motivator to me, 'cause I write all my songs, or pretty much a good chunk of 'em, after a J. It's no joke. It's the truth. Know whumsayin'? I don't mind that. As long as my mother knows I smoke weed. She doesn't approve but, as long as she knows, I don't give a fuck who knows. She would be the last person on earth I

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OR  
CONSEQUENCES.

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**TRUTH:** A lot of monitors "color" their sound. They don't deliver truly flat response. Their technology is full of compromises. Their components are from a variety of sources, and not designed to precisely integrate with each other.

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**CONSEQUENCES:** When pushed hard, most tweeters simply fail. Transient detail blurs, and the material itself deforms and breaks down. Other materials can't take the stress, and crack under pressure.

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distortion, and is key in producing the 4400's deep, powerful, clean bass.

**CONSEQUENCES:** Conventional magnetic structures utilize non-symmetrical magnetic fields, which add significantly to distortion due to a nonlinear pull on the voice coil.

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**CONSEQUENCES:** For reasons of economics, monitors will often use stamped rather than cast frames, resulting in both mechanical distortion and power compression.

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**CONSEQUENCES:** You'll never know the "truth" until you do.



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# MELISSA ETHERIDGE

Love, Relationships  
and the Quest  
for Truth

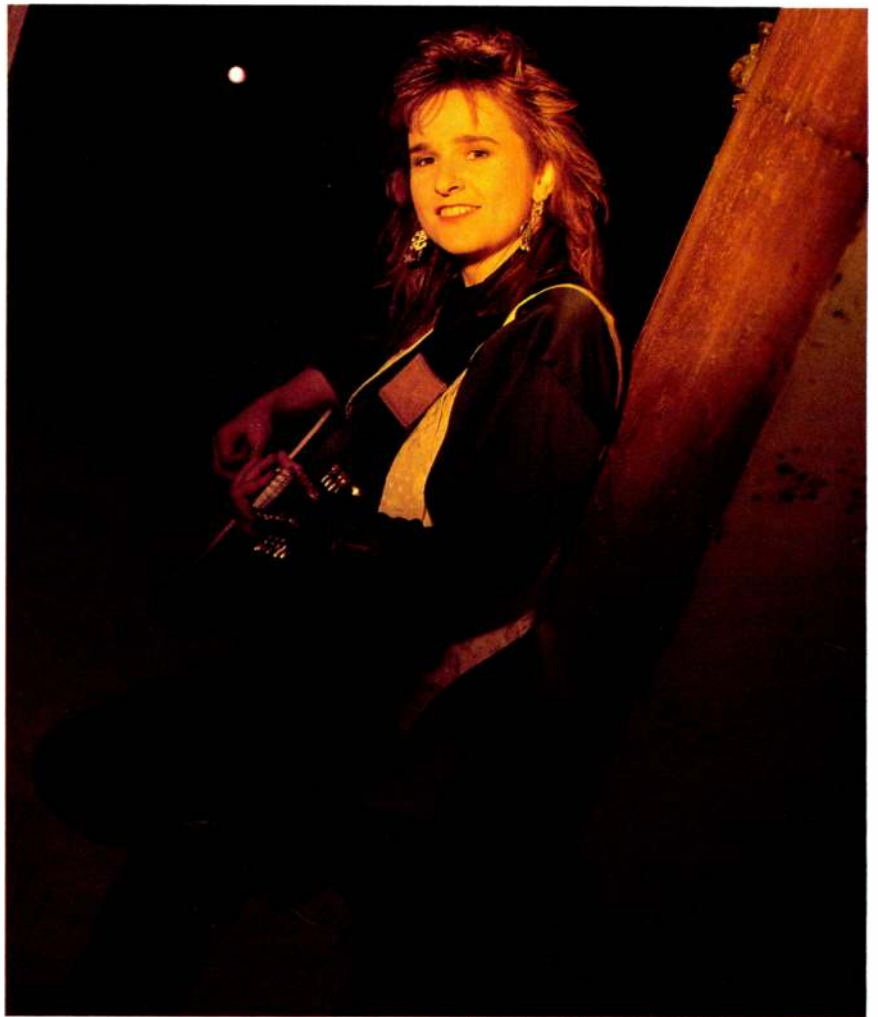
BY SCOTT BENARDE

**E**VEN THE GRINDING of bulldozers widening the ocean road along Miami Beach doesn't disturb Melissa Etheridge as she sits on a hotel terrace in the city's Art Deco district discussing her music. Water serves as a soothing metaphor in Etheridge's vivid songs, and the Atlantic Ocean across the street looks calm enough to soothe the singer for a lifetime.

Then again, water may have less to do with her cheerful mood than her recent run of good fortune. During the past six months, the 29-year-old's self-titled debut was released on Island Records to critical acclaim; a trio of cheating-heart songs from the album—"Like the Way I Do," "Bring Me Some Water," "Similar Features"—got heavy AOR airplay and Etheridge earned a Grammy nomination for Best Rock Vocalist—Female. Her performance on the awards telecast boosted album sales and pushed Etheridge closer to the Big Time. At the Grammys, Etheridge sat near Joni Mitchell, one of her childhood idols, and mustered the courage to thank Mitchell for the inspiration.

On top of all that, a follow-up album called *Brave and Crazy* is already recorded and scheduled for release in September. No sophomore jinx here. The songs—five of which she performs on her current tour—rock harder than her first collection.

She hesitates to analyze the new songs until the record is released. "I want the judgment to be made after it's out," Etheridge says. She does volunteer that while the new songs are more uptempo, "they're still intensely personal, looking inside. But I'm older and my scope is a little more outward. I don't promise more happiness. I'm still struggling with love, with relationships



**"I'm more a victimizer than I've ever been a victim."**

and with the quest for truth."

Those themes fill her first album too, but it would be a mistake to interpret the record as an odyssey of heartbreak and infidelity, or see the singer as a hapless, sometimes defiant character who can't even *buy* a partner's love or loyalty. The album's not the story of a victim of love, but a search for honesty, a continuous struggle between wanting to have the cake and eat it too, and the hard realization that life requires making choices and paying consequences. Although three of the album's 10 songs are about infidelity, they are trysts the singer reluctantly condones. The album's last song, "I Want You," about *her* cheating ways, makes clear that Etheridge gives as good as she gets. Much of the bittersweetness in her music comes from having to live with the rules she makes.

"I'm more a victimizer than I'm ever a victim," she says while digging into a plate of tortilla chips and salsa and treating herself to a rare piña colada. "These

are songs of how I set up my life, of being a woman dealing in a heavy professional career, the choices I have to make for that, the time I have to give to that. It's hard to find a relationship with someone who's going to say, 'Yeah, fine, go away for six months. Your music is everything'—which it is to me.

"If you want to have a relationship with me it's no strings attached. It's got to be open to what I feel about anything and anyone. They're going with what I set up. They sleep with another woman and boom, she's got similar features and similar hair. There's never any dishonesty done to me because I set up the relationships that way. The anger you may hear in there is from the struggle of my choice."

She began writing songs at age 10. "My songwriting developed before I did. Writing has become part of my life process. When things happen to me they go through this filter."

That process can start with a lyric,





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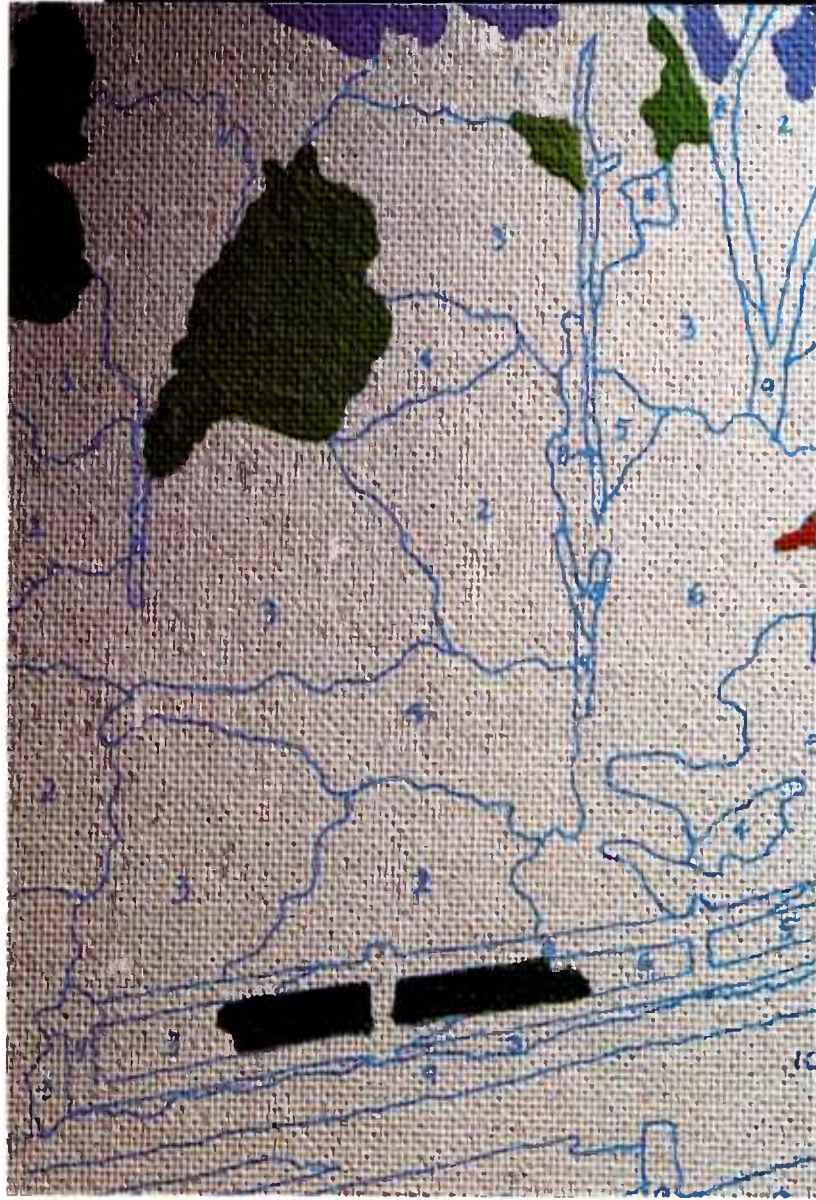
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melody or rhythm. The album cut "Occasionally" began as a rhythm beaten out on a car steering wheel while driving home from a gig. On record and in concert Etheridge performs the song solo while banging on the back of her guitar. Songs such as "Bring Me Some Water" were written in hours, while others, like "Chrome Plated Heart," took months.

She discovered that "the more personal I got, the more truthful I got and the more people related. I began to challenge myself to see how personal I could get—in a universal way."

That challenge is well met in "Like the Way I Do." It's difficult to find a more collar-shaking chorus out there in commercial radio land than "Tell me does she love you/Like the way I love you/Does she stimulate you, attract and captivate you/Tell me does she miss you, existing just to kiss you/Like the way I do/Tell me does she want you, infatuate and haunt you/Does she know just how to shock and electrify and rock you/Does she inject you, seduce you and affect you/Like the way I do..."

As daring and cocky as they are, the lyrics are also full of fear and doubt, as defensive as they are aggressive.

Etheridge admits she doesn't reach those lyrical heights on every song. Water, rain, daylight, darkness and fire are recurring metaphors in her songs. Some work, some don't. Rain is both a cleansing and menacing image. "I remember growing up in Kansas some storms would frighten you. Then there were days it was so hot and then the clouds would roll in and quench everything."

Referring to "Bring Me Some Water," she adds that "there's nothing like pure water to throw on you. It's so cleansing and soothing in the heat of an anger that I couldn't direct toward the person because I had [created the problem]. It's a good thing I'm not a drinker or user of drugs because that's the feeling I needed, a blast out of reality."

Of her repetitive allusions to burning, Etheridge pleads for mercy. "As a younger songwriter it's easy to fall into the trap of the fire metaphor. The challenge is to find other metaphors."

That probably won't be too difficult. Etheridge seems born to write and perform. Her earliest memories of growing up in Leavenworth, Kansas are of dancing in front of family and friends as a three- or four-year-old. She remembers everybody watching and the wonderful feeling she got from the attention. Before her parents gave her a guitar at eight, she was strumming a tennis racket and enlisting neighborhood friends to

play makeshift pot-and-pan drum kits. Along with singing Tammy Wynette and Loretta Lynn songs in high school country bands came dreams of leaving Leavenworth for something bigger.

Her short stay (two semesters) at the Berklee College of Music in Boston was more a way out of Smalltown, U.S.A. than anything else. "It was a great school I didn't take as much advantage of as I could have," Etheridge says.

By 29, Etheridge had moved to the West Coast to make it in the music business. She was a fixture at the Que Sera Sera, a bar in Long Beach where she performed for four years.

That's where she began writing songs about her conflicts with careers and relationships. That's where she chose the role of victimizer, had an affair and wrote "I Want You," the first infidelity song that would be the last, most telling track on her debut album.

"I Want You" is the oldest song on the album, Etheridge says. "I wrote it years ago. It's where this part of my life started, that desire and intensity of relationships and the dark side of feelings on a sexual basis."

In 1987 Island Records chief Chris Blackwell heard her unbridled voice and moving, heart-on-the-sleeve music and offered her a record deal. Recording the album was initially an ordeal. For 15 years Etheridge had performed as a solo act with no more accompaniment than her 12-string Ovation. Suddenly, she had a producer, a studio, a back-up band and no clues. "I didn't know how to make an album," she recalls. "The first producer's way of making an album was to put down layer after layer of sounds and put the voice on top of that. I said, 'Okay, he's the producer. He must know how to

## LIKE THE WAY SHE DOES

**E**theridge plays an Ovation Adamas 12-string electric-acoustic guitar with Adamas light-gauge strings. She exclusively uses Jim Dunlop .50 picks. "I play real percussively and it's the only pick that won't break on me," she says. She doesn't use a stage amp, preferring to plug directly into the P.A. system. "That way," she says, "I really get what the guitar sounds like coming out of the monitors."

Bassist **Kevin McCormick** plays a Music Man custom fretless bass through a Trace Elliot amp and also uses a Yamaha bass on some numbers. Drummer **Fritz Lewack** plays Yamaha drums with Zildjian cymbals and Vic Firth drum sticks. Guitarist/keyboard player **Bernie Larsen** plays a custom-rigged Sears Silvertone guitar given to him by David Lindley. He uses Marshall and EMD amps. The keyboard is a Roland D-50.

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Between 1946 and 1952, he recorded nine Top 10 rhythm & blues hits, creating standards like "Driftin' Blues," "Black Night" and "Merry Christmas, Baby." His popularity was rivaled only by Nat "King" Cole and Louis Jordan, his influence essential on Ray Charles and Sam Cooke.

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do this." But Blackwell didn't want—or like—layers of safe sounds. The album, which had taken one month to record, was rejected.

"Then it hit me," Etheridge says. "It was the simplicity and power of the guitar and the songs." Blackwell gave Etheridge four days to re-cut the album that would eventually earn her a Grammy nomination. "I like the album. My goal was to be proud of the album and make a record I could live with."

Even so, she says, "Live performances are my favorite. There's nothing like it in the world. You start a flow, a give and take of energy with the audience. By the end of the night it's a celebration, even with all these painful songs. I feel exorcised. I feel free."

That night at Woody's on the Beach, the rock club co-owned by Rolling Stone Ron Wood, Etheridge backs up her words, making a leap for freedom with a gut-wrenching performance. Her voice thunders like a howitzer and just as easily trails off into a pleading whisper. It is engrossing, acoustic-flavored rock performed with unfettered passion.

In the middle of the show, while picking out the introduction to "Precious Pain," Etheridge lets everyone in on her secret. "People always ask me," she tells the audience in an exaggerated drawl, "Melissa, why are you so heart-broken?" I tell them, "My heart is not all broken; it's just experienced. I've been living and feeling." ❧

## TONE-LÔC from page 22

would want to know that I did smoke weed, but she knows."

AND SO IT GOES. Tone-Lôc will probably do this record biz thing another year, if that much, he says, and release one more album. "Then that's it. Tone'll go kick it somewhere, be in the house... I'll probably just get back into my real estate, buying foreclosures, fixin' 'em up and selling 'em for an enormous profit."

When last seen, the brother Tone-Lôc was on his way back to the West Coast, pushing pushy journalists out of his mind, contemplating two upcoming holidays: a week at the Reggae Sunsplash in Jamaica, and three weeks of hunting in the Tanzanian outback, with a filthy-rich white friend of his sponsoring the trip. I've asked him to put me down for the African long haul, as the official documentarian for the expedition, and he says he will. I can't wait. What an article this'll be. I've even got the title already. Bus' it: *Tanzania with Tone.* ❧



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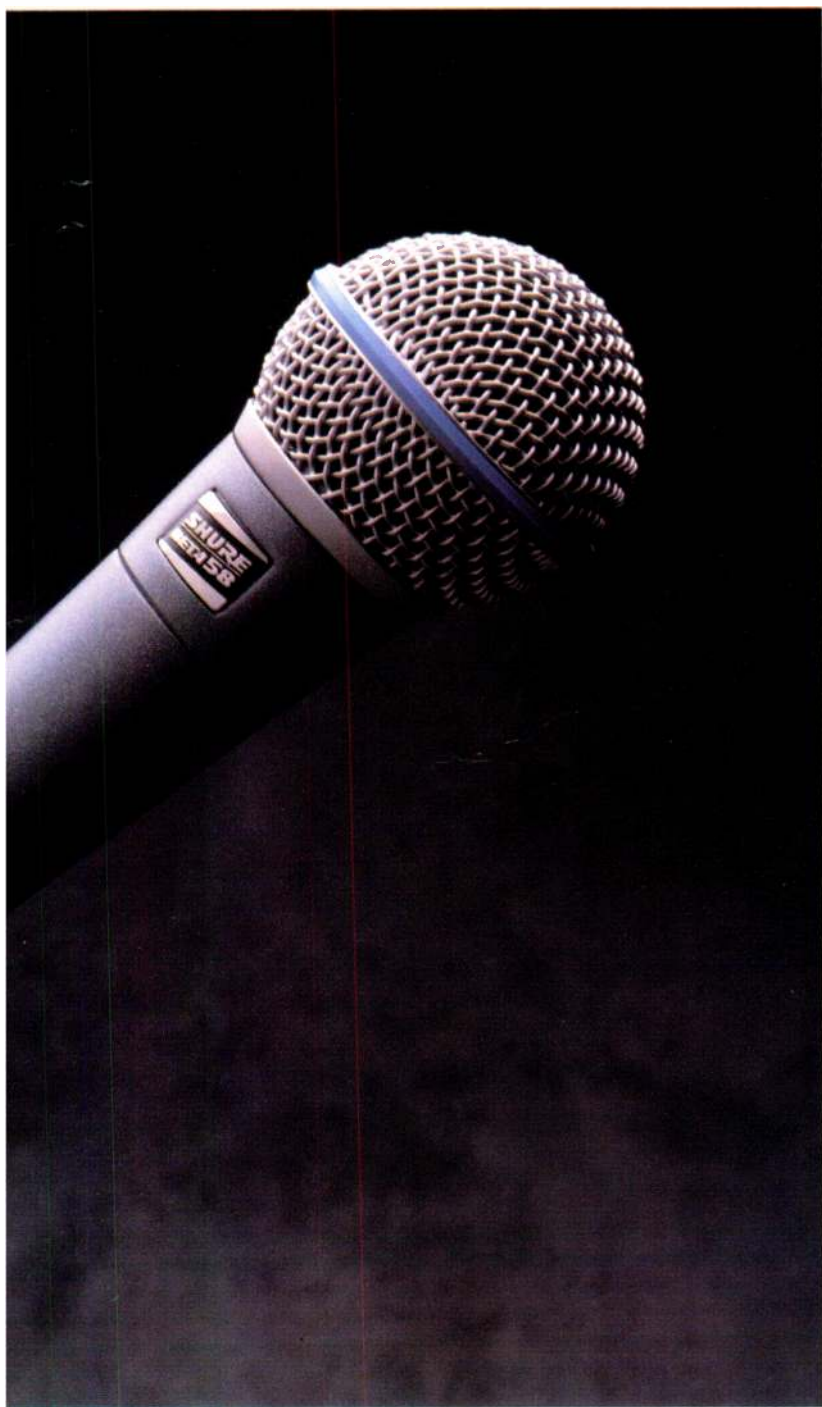
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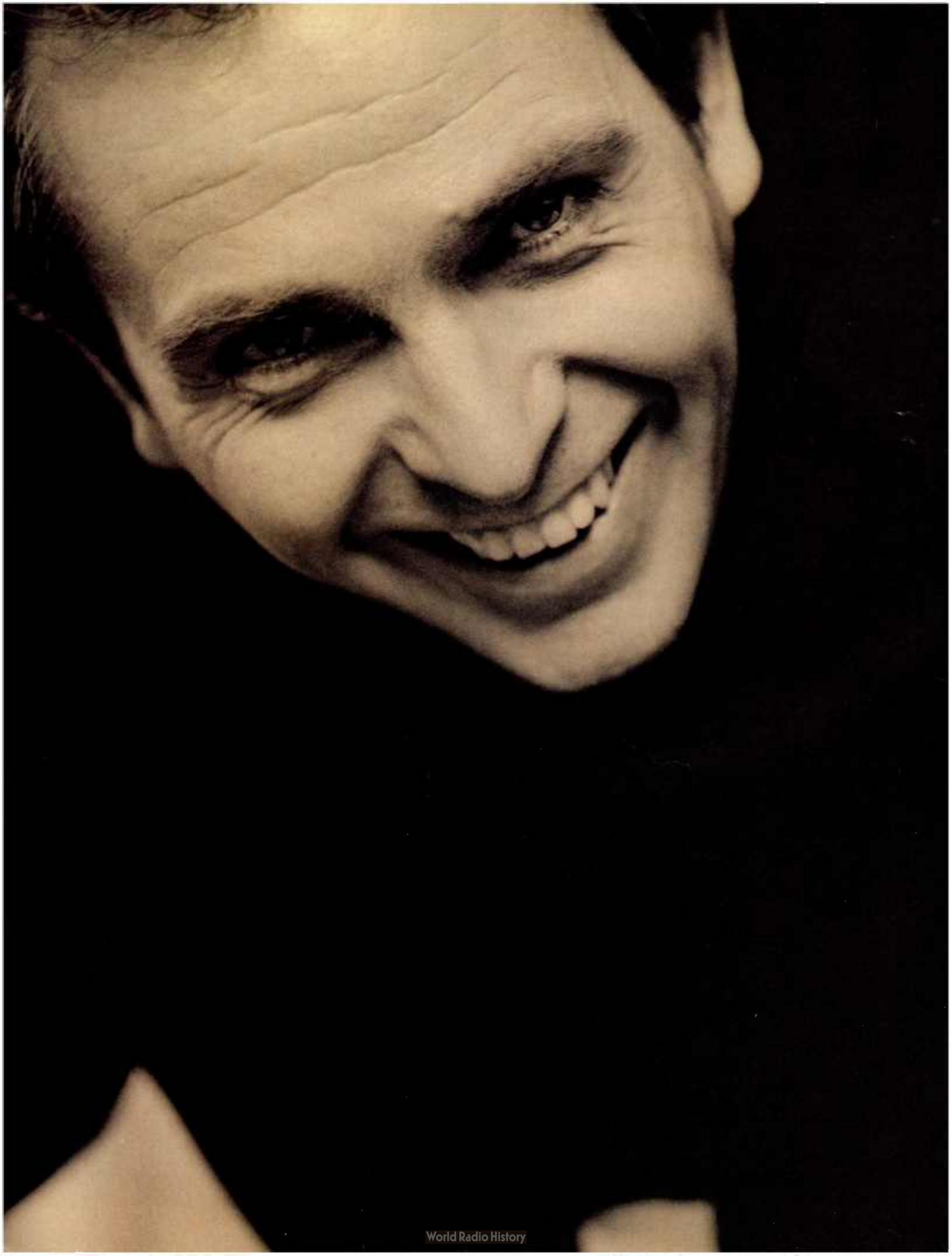
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# PETER GABRIEL'S TICKLE THERAPY

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It's a long way from Genesis to the Passion, but Saint Peter has all the keys.  
By Jock Baird

**W**E'RE VERY LUCKY in music, in that we're still able to experiment without having our careers automatically written off. A lot of people in film, for instance, wouldn't get the money to make experimental stuff, and if they did and if it bombed or didn't do as well as their last movie, they'd have a lot of trouble getting work next time. That's part of the reason why all of my royalties have tended to go into studios rather than houses around the world. It's so I'm never separated from my tools and never dependent on record company approval to make the music that I want to make."

Welcome to the Real World. Real World studios, where much of Peter Gabriel's royalties go. It fills a two-century-old mill and its outbuildings and more of it is buried into the steep green hills of Box village, several miles east of Bath, England. It's Gabriel's base of operations and home for his two-year-old state-of-the-art

PHOTO BY ANDREW & STEWART DOUGLAS

studio complex; it's also headquarters of his private record label, Real World, and lately, since he's separated from his wife of 18 years, his residence. An efficient office staff helps him carry on his personal business and coordinate the benefit concerts Gabriel is so committed to. Across the lane, sheltered in a quonset hut, is WOMAD, or World of Music, Arts and Dance, the international arts organization that Gabriel helped create back in the early '80s. He still hopes to add a separate audio-visual studio. A crack cooking staff in a dining hall/kitchen feeds Real World's fluctuating population.

The centerpiece of the complex is the main studio control area, which sits like an island of electronics at the center of a



At Real World, solving a head scratcher for Hugh Padgham.

large room. The various wall surfaces of glass, metal, ceramic and foam look as much like large sculptures as they do sound baffles. The console faces huge windows which frame a mill pond. Off to the east run grass, cattle, muddy streams, Tudor mansions... It's probably the most beautiful studio room in the world, but producers Hugh Padgham and George Acogny have no time to admire the view. They're mixing the single to Youssou N'Dour's new album, a punchy, uplifting track that Gabriel wrote and helped sing called "Shaking the Tree," a paean to feminism. Acogny, a former New Yorker who moved to Senegal, is the producer of the N'Dour album and has been a close friend of Gabriel's for the last three years (George introduced him to Manu Katché). Padgham is an old Genesis-Gabriel cohort, brought in to mix the single. At the moment, George and Hugh are stuck.

It seems the stereo horns which help power the two-chord vamp are out of phase, not all the way, perhaps only about 60 degrees off, but enough to notice. It's one more cutting-edge annoyance. Gabriel is in the midst of a photo shoot, a necessary evil he keeps tight control over, but he pulls off to huddle with the two producers. It's apparently a problem with the stereo samples, made on an expensive WaveFrame workstation, that can't be quickly edited out. Surely, Padgham hopes, there must be some way to fix the samples without taking hours to go back in and reedit them on the computer. Gabriel cheerfully suggests it won't take that long and could perhaps be done that evening. After all, this one song, which was originally supposed to have taken two days, has claimed a solid month. No point in taking a shortcut now. It's a crucial record for his friend Youssou, who's a superstar in Senegal but

has yet to explode on the world stage, and everything should be right.

Whether it's the stereo phase-shift of the horns, the writing, arranging and singing of the song, or even the surfaces that cover the massive control room's walls, Peter Gabriel wants to be involved. He isn't overwhelmed by detail and he has no problem delegating authority—he's just interested in all the different facets of a piece of music, and is also probably the one with the best ideas how to make it better. When he pulls all the levels of his musical inquiries together onto a single, focused rock album, which he manages to do every four years or so, he consistently comes up with moving, lasting, often disturbing rock masterpieces. There have been five of these since Gabriel left Genesis in 1975. The first three, each formally titled *Peter Gabriel*, are known as the Rainy Windshield (1977), the Fingernails (1978) and the Melting Face (1980), that last best remembered for its terrifying opener "Intruder" and anthemic closer "Biko." The fourth and final *Peter Gabriel* LP (1982) was called *Security* in the States and put him on Top 40 with "Shock the Monkey," a tune accompanied by one of the greatest rock videos ever made, directed by Gabriel. His most lyrical and unabashedly pop record, *So*, became a mega-success and was everybody's favorite album, single and video of 1986. The man has what they call good catalog.

Three years to the month after the release of *So*, Peter Gabriel has a new album. But no, it's not the Next Peter Gabriel album you were probably hoping for. It's an instrumental work developed from his sterling soundtrack for *The Last Temptation of Christ* and retitled *Passion*. In fact, if you're one of the millions of casual listeners who never heard of Gabriel until *So*, uh... maybe you shouldn't run right out and buy it.

"This record is not for the newcomers, I think." Gabriel nods. "This is hardcore stuff in a way. *Birdy* [his 1983 soundtrack LP] sold 100,000. *So* sold five million. I think *Passion* is going to be closer to *Birdy* sales than *So*, you know, being realistic. But that's okay. For the most part, both record companies I work with now are actually very supportive and I haven't had any problems over type of material—except when I was dropped by Atlantic for the third album."

That's kind of a head-scratcher. Did Atlantic reject the same "Biko" album that eventually came out on Mercury? How could they turn down a record that helped remake '80s recording? "Oh, the same way you described it, as 'disturbed,'" he smiles. "I think Ahmet Ertegun said during the playbacks, 'Has Peter been hospitalized?'"

"People don't think I have a sense of humor, which to me is the most insulting thing you can say about a person," adds

Gabriel as the laughter subsides. "So I'm very offended by that. And sure, I can be miserable at times but there's a side of me which, within music, is very much to do with fun and a lot lighter than that. And it's very important to me. It's just as important."

Gabriel, his day-long photo shoot done, adjourns to the second floor of the cottage where he now lives. His daughters have been visiting, and their poster paints are on the floor. A set of free weights and a book on playing better tennis attest to his vegetarian-assisted health; a little keyboard and mike setup reveal his private industry and a single-



In Genesis days. Taking himself too seriously? Nahhh.  
World radio history



handed clock on which each hour reads “one-ish, two-ish,” etc., may say something about his sense of time. Soft-spoken and not given to rush his thoughts, Gabriel is occasionally prone to digressions, most of which can be as interesting as the original subject, and some of which are used to turn the question away from himself. He has an endearing habit of saying “A” when collecting a thought and never saying “B,” and when the phone starts ringing regularly he can get the traces of a harried look. Because even though it doesn’t seem so at first, Peter Gabriel is a man who really *is* working fast. He just wants to do it right.

*THE LAST TEMPTATION of Christ* came out in August of ’88, yet Gabriel spent seven more months continuing to work on the music. What was he trying to achieve? “Well, I’m naturally a slow worker, and there were things that I’d heard in the music that I just hadn’t completed. And I love doing instrumental music—some of the time. There are only so many opportunities in a film, and they don’t always want to use long stretches of music when what is appropriate is 10 or 20 seconds. So to turn that into a piece and stretch it, you have to build it up as a separate entity. That’s the attitude I took with the album, to try and treat it as a piece of work in its own right. And I’ve ended up spending the better part of a year on this now, so it’s not a fly-by-night thing.

“Certainly this project for me meant searching Middle Eastern music, learning about some of the rhythms, just trying to get a sense of the textures. And I talked quite a long time with Marty [Scorsese, *Temptation’s* director] just trying to get ideas on the music. What he was trying to do with the film, I think, was give focus to this struggle between Jesus’ humanity and His divinity and put that in a very realistic or credible physical environment. So I wanted the music to be alive in a way that perhaps has almost a street sensibility about it. Normally Biblical films have this distant sheen, a sort of hallowed Shakespearean glow, and the people are already halfway to becoming angels. The idea here was to give a sense of what it would be really like for these fishermen and herdsman, real working-class or blue-collar people. Because they were in that time and that tends to be forgotten.

“Quite apart from film music, one of the things that I’ve always liked is unfamiliar landscapes that I can explore. All my favorite records have that, so when you first put that needle on you’d sense that you were being taken on an adventure.”

Still, there’s something genuinely dark and disturbing in some of these tracks, an intensity that goes far beyond mere historical accuracy. “Yes, but I think within the film, the way you get this sense of achievement when Christ returns to the cross is to have given some power and strength to His humanity. Which you do by showing, as is clear in the Bible, that He didn’t come down God; He came down as a man. So you have that internal struggle we were trying to convey.

“I know one of the first scenes that Marty showed me was the slow-motion one of Him carrying the cross up to Golgotha



**Preparing to fall into the audience in Argentina, hoping for a tickle.**

“This tortured soul business can get very boring. There’s part of me that feels pleasure. fun and good humor... The grand romantic vision is overplayed a lot.”

through these little back Moroccan streets, and I knew I wanted to get these beautiful, soulful voices onto this dark, moody backdrop, with this Brazilian rhythm running underneath it. It melts into this slow, endless, persistent pain. That was what it was bringing up to me.”

Some of *Passion* is textural—location and mood stuff. But other pieces cross into genuine compositions, even though their musical elements seem at times abstract to western ears. The absence of standard pitch, melody, rhythm and chordal devices presented opportunities and problems. “Pitch was a particular problem, in that some of the scales are very different

from our own. Originally I wanted to try and get comfortable with some of the other scales and, really, I didn’t pull it off. There are one or two things we did which will reflect those scales and tunings, but for the most part....

“I also worked with this guy who played an A-flute from Turkey, who showed me some of the scale divisions—he would have 70 divisions in his head in one octave,

while we only use 12. It’s somewhat like Indian scales, where you’d end up at a different frequency depending on whether you’d arrived on the note on an ascending or descending phrase. And that was a real eye-opener, because in one sense we’ve gained enormously by introducing harmony, but until this year I had no idea how much we’d lost by restricting the pitch and the intervals. There’s a whole language of expression to these subtleties.”

Just in case Gabriel scholars wish to examine more closely how he works, his Real World label is releasing a companion volume called *Passion Sources*, which are *Passion’s* “starting points from rhythm or texture or instruments, about 30 pieces. Some of them would just suggest ways of doing things, solutions to problems.

“I try when I’m writing to fill my head and my ears with all sorts of stuff and then let it settle and filter through. At a certain point it seems like fruitless activity because you’re taking a lot of time and not seeming to get anything. And then, slowly, you realize you’ve actually digested elements and that

your thinking is being freed up and the way you build up compositions is changed as a result of what you've been listening to.

"'Zaar,' for instance, was built around an Egyptian rhythm I heard and liked. But it was a very different speed so we slowed it down—not to half-speed but it's getting down there. And from being a driving, uppish sort of thing, it became a quite dark and moodier spine on which to base the track."

The compelling "Zaar" is one example of Gabriel throwing himself into expressing the dark, dangerous aspects of Christ's story with more gusto than he has the sacred, devotional ones. Just as some actors are better at playing villains than heroes, is it possible Gabriel felt more drawn to the sinful parts? "Well, some of the sweeter things are used in the darker moments of the film, and some of the darker things are used in the uplifting moments. I mean, the film is definitely about the *struggle*. And presenting that was the first goal. The attempts to lift it were really not the subject matter until the very end, the victory."

Did he mean to give a year of his life to making this record? "Oh no, of course not," he laughs. "I never intend for *any* of my projects to take as long as they do!"

This begs the question of what comes after *Passion*. Might he come out of this phase with a more unified and positive statement, just as *So* exuded a kind of resolution after the animalistic fervor of *Security*? "If you have a diet of darkness, then a little bit of daylight and fun is a nice contrast. And at the moment I'm actually thinking for the next album of doing two albums, one almost textural things, moody songs, and the other based around rhythm and dance. What I might do before that, though, is to put together an interim collection of songs that haven't gone out, a sort of odds and sods collection, perhaps with some live stuff on it. I was looking at a video we did in Greece on the last tour—which is now two years back—

#### Shaking off his demons on the '88 Amnesty tour.



"The classic learning curve with world music is you start off thinking anything strange is good. Then you realize there's good and bad and later wonder 'Why would I like *that*?'"

and there was this version of 'In Your Eyes' I wanted to put out. Because the songs do change once they get played in. Not always for the better, but often the *spirit* is better honed. Sometimes I think the best way to record is to do an entire album and then throw it away and play it again live. Often I wonder if things are as good as I feel I'm capable of getting them before I let them go."

Gabriel's record labels must occasionally feel a touch of impatience. The cynical will wonder whether *Passion* was released because he had to give an album to Geffen this year. "Oh, I should have given everyone albums," he shrugs, "but all the record companies know, and I make it quite clear, that I work on my own pace and they accept and understand that when they sign me. So... although it would make them happy for me to produce more frequently, I feel I can do better work allowing myself creative space to recharge the batteries."

Still, if I were David Geffen I might be thinking, "Okay, Peter, I'm happy to give you time if it's spent on your music, but what about all these side projects, soundtracks, Youssou's album..."

"Yes. I hope you don't emphasize this point too much in the article," Gabriel laughs. "It won't help me at *all*! No, these thoughts are base, and reality, and I *am* looking forward to doing the next studio album."

"I know," he smiles, "that people want *Son of So*." Since *So*, the Gabriel sound, or what can be called the "Gaseous Cloud Effect," has appeared on a number of other albums, notably Joni Mitchell and Robbie Robertson's last efforts. Some of this involves just hiring Gabriel's own band. "Well, I don't keep them on retainer, so they're their own men. And in a way the Robertson and Joni things were quite nice. I did a little bit of work on both those things, too. But yeah, there are a few singers now who've hired all the band and then just have themselves singing, and that does seem a little strange."

Is there a danger his sound could be spread too thin? "I hadn't thought of it that way, but I remember there was a time when Sting was guesting on everyone's records and I thought, 'He's doing too much of this.' You have to be a little selective. But I'm also learning to say no to things for myself. It takes a little practice but I'm getting better at it."

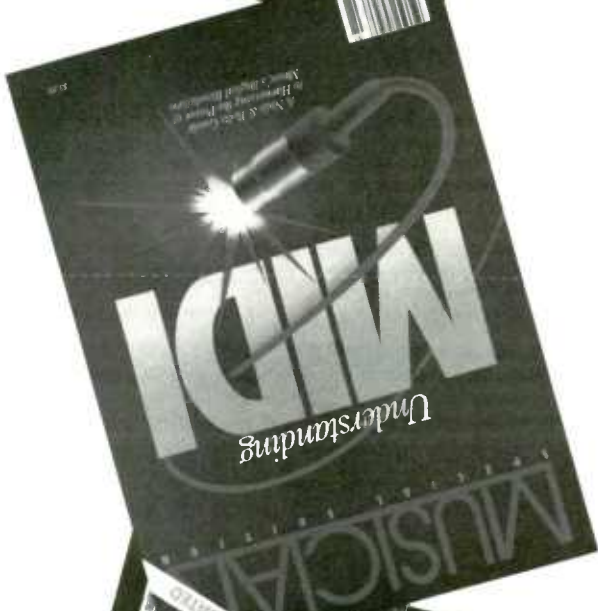
Gabriel can't say no to everything, though. He's still very interested in bringing the concept of the amusement park into the '90s, a project he first revealed back in '86. The Australian initiative he was exploring then never bore fruit, but now there's a chance to do something in Barcelona for the 1992 Olympics, and he's got a new proposal ready. "With this Real World amusement park concept, you can create adventures which people can interact with. And that's an important part of my work. A lot of other artists are going to get involved with this and take it seriously as a medium."

Gabriel's albums have a kind of amusement park consciousness, too. His first LP is a roller coaster or fun house, with oddball tempo and feel changes designed to sur-



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prise and provoke the listener. "I think part of the first two albums was a case of a songwriter in search of a style," he admits. "And I felt I found that on the third album."

On that third album Gabriel was still trying to surprise people and provide them with musical adventure, but instead of pulling practical jokes on them he was offering exotic explorations. The surprises were woven into the conception itself, making the music deeper and less gimmicky. "I think that's a good point," nods Gabriel, "and I'll use it in future interviews. It wasn't conscious but I'm sure that's correct. But you know, I wasn't very confident at that point. Although I'd done writing on my own, I'd always worked with the same group of people, in a band. I'd gone out [of Genesis] to leave the business, and I hadn't done it for a while, which makes you start to think, 'Well, can I? Can I cut it on my own?' Because I really hadn't gone out to do a solo career. I just knew I wanted to be a songwriter rather than perform."

The everything-but-the-London-Symphony-and-they're-on-side-two extravagance of Gabriel's solo debut also had a lot to do with producer Bob Ezrin, who had come to Gabriel after recording Lou Reed's *Berlin* and Alice Cooper. "On that first album Bob played a strong role," Gabriel says. "I felt I needed that at the time. He has a very sharp mind, and I was impressed by the way he talked about the music, my songs, and what he described in terms of atmospheres. For instance he played me Paul Winter's 'Icarus,' in terms of texture, I think in connection with 'Humdrum.' That won him a lot of points in my book straight away. He just seemed to hear the center of a song and be very positive in constructively criticizing the composition. A lot of producers are good with sound, but there's another tradition—in some cases a whole other generation—of production which is to do with encouraging the writer to pull the best out of himself and develop the material. I like being challenged as a writer, too. And I think Daniel Lanois pushed me beyond where I would've stopped sometimes."

Gabriel's second LP was produced by Robert Fripp. "In a way that was the opposite, having gone from a very strong song-based producer to a musician who was a friend and who was very good with atmospheres. The way he likes to work sometimes is very fast and...bare. Now I like bare, but when it's...perfect." He chuckles. "And in a way that didn't really suit me. And I think some of those songs could've been better. Overall, from the point of view of sound, it's the album I'm least satisfied with."

Some good songs, though. Better than the first LP. "Yeah. I listen back and I hear more now, but we didn't get the best out of the songs. I'm good with texture, I know that's one of the things I do, and I didn't really get to explore that on that album."

By that point Gabriel had cemented a working relationship with musicians such as Larry Fast, Tony Levin, Jerry Marotta and Phil Aaberg, all highly skilled American session players.



Did they offer lots of feedback on the early records? "Yeah, they were really enthusiastic! And for me that was a big barrier, working with these *session* men. I was intimidated at the prospect. I was just some weird singer who wore silly masks and was hanging out in this English art rock band. You know, Genesis in some ways became a *musician's band* later on, but at that time it was still seen by many as very English and not having much substance."

The *Fingernails* album also introduced a misfit character who built his cabin out of junk and kept trying to get on the radio. Autobiography? "Moso is someone that comes up in different guises in different places. I even started to build a film script around him. I was reading Jung and this alchemy stuff, and always

gold is made out of shit, it's from rubbish, the waste that people throw away and discard. In this studio we're trying to combine hand-made, cheap, discarded elements with the best and latest in technology. It's very easy to get into this high-tech, sanitized modern world and lose the sort of gut, the grit, or the grunt factor, as we call it, which comes from the failings and mistakes and quirks and discarded elements."

Clearly by 1980's *Melting Face* album, Gabriel had outgrown the conventional '70s rock vocabulary and completely replaced it. "There were three tools of liberation for me, the first being rhythm and being able to produce my own, which came originally through this very cheap PAIA drum machine kit that Larry introduced me to. Secondly, sound texture. The reason I got so excited about the *Fairlight* was I'd always dreamt of being able to sample, though there wasn't a word for it at that time. But I'd postulated ideas, because I'd been very much into tape speed up until then—Anthony Phillips [the Genesis guitarist who preceded Steve Hackett] really was the person who introduced me to it. So to suddenly have all those sound textures at your fingertips was wonderful. I loved the idea you could go out and trap colors that you liked and then build new worlds out of them. And then the third was world music, which again didn't really have a term then. We didn't know whether to call it ethnic music, third-world music, whatever. It all sort of came together around the third album, the *Fairlight* barely. In fact we had the demo during the course of the third album and it didn't really get used properly. So, really, the fourth album was the first sampling album."

It's hard to avoid the third album's brooding, obsessive mood. The last song on the second LP was "Home Sweet Home," wherein a young wife carrying her baby steps out an eleventh-floor window to her death. ("Well, I'd read about it in the paper, it was a real story, so that hit hard. An everyday story of English folk.") The third album's bleakness extended that grim mood. Gabriel's best work has often seemed to be warding off some terrible darkness. Domestically, these are



With Arquette—one artist's life lesson is another's big date.

tough days for the singer; his long marriage is over, he's living at the office. What is his current attitude toward hearth and home? "I love it, I love both sides: home, family, kids, domestic, and then also the adventure of the artist. As for a big emotional change around that time, I think they're always easier for outsiders to spot anyway. And sometimes I can write the happiest songs when I'm at my most miserable and vice versa. Joni Mitchell had this line I liked: 'Laughing and crying, you know it's the same release.' I think particularly for English people, who really have to learn how to express their emotions, it's very important to find ways of getting it out.

"I think I'd like to see a tickle therapy instituted, so I could pioneer it. I've always fancied myself as a tickler. Maybe that's why I do my jump in the crowd, to get a little tickle value. When did I start doing that? I think it must have been around 'Lay Your Hands on Me.' I know there was one gig in New York on the last night of the tour, and I persuaded the whole band to try it. So they all went—with a certain amount of trepidation."

Afraid the crowd might take you and drop the drummer? "Yeah, that's right! In fact someone did get dropped a little bit. I've been dropped a few times. San Francisco one time, they all cleared—'slightly used goods, we don't want them.' They may have been clearing a space thinking I was going to disappear in a puff of smoke, but...no such luck."

GABRIEL SUGGESTS a dinner break at the mess hall. Padgham and Acogny join him at one end of the long table while a new band who've just started recording at Real World fill up the other end. It all feels like a college cafeteria. The talk turns to commercial endorsements and Gabriel offers the opinion that Genesis' credibility was far more damaged by their involvement with Michelob than was Steve Winwood's, because Genesis' audience believed in them with more fervor than Winwood's newfound MOR crowd. Gabriel also lets drop that he was offered a similar deal for perhaps as much as a million and turned it down, declaring that much of rock's power comes from the fact that it is free. The irony of Madonna taking the money from Pepsi and escaping with her credibility intact is raised, but Gabriel scornfully opines that the most controversial part of her video was directly inspired by the infamous *Last Temptation* sex scene, and that she had coldly calculated the whole brouhaha. "I get quite worried by this fundamentalism, this Salman Rushdie thing," Gabriel says. "The photographer today was saying he did a photograph of Rushdie after *The Satanic Verses* had come out but before the death threat was issued. And he was actually talking about *The Last Temptation*, because at the time he thought the protests

"I saw Cat Stevens supporting Rushdie's death. That scared me, 'cause I've worked with this guy! I played flute on *Mona Bone Jakon*... Obviously Islam won him over completely."

against his book were going to be quite small-fry. And I saw Cat Stevens interviewed on English television, the way he was supporting Rushdie's death. That scared me, 'cause I've worked with this guy. I played flute, somewhat badly, on *Mona Bone Jakon* and got to know him a little bit. He was very bright, maybe insecure, but certainly an intelligent, liberal musician. And obviously he's found something in Islam that has won him over completely. And for me, it's quite scary to see the individual conscience destroyed in that way. I think of Jonestown, and every time I hear of another TV evangelist getting done for money, fraud, sex or drugs, I breathe a sigh of relief. Because it's very scary the way people surrender to certainties. And the more complex and frightening the world becomes, the more people will seek that sort of security. I find that extremely disturbing."

Dinner's over, and Gabriel is back at the cottage. "Although I don't practice religion, I still feel religious in some ways, and I certainly respect everyone's right to a faith and to belief. But a death threat intrudes too far."

Given the number of religious images in Gabriel's lyrics, it's obvious Christianity is "poured deep in my consciousness, whether I choose it or not." He smiles ruefully. "To me it's like knowledge, it can be a tool to increase the sense of enlightenment, vitality, quality. Or it can be a tool to close things down." Gabriel brings up the Spanish Inquisition, beats up on imperialism, recounts a hair-raising news clipping about heathens being butchered by missionary-inspired converts, and asks how Americans would feel if Japan forced Shintoism on the U.S.A. Whew. So religion has no value? "I've met some people that I would call holy men in the Church of England, and there definitely seems to be something saintly about them. And I have the most enormous respect for the work that is done. But there are many occasions when the price is too high. The classic statement is Dylan's 'With God on Our Side.' So it scares me."

For Martin Scorsese, Christ's return to the Cross after His temptation was relevant to every modern sinner who dreams of getting a second chance at grace. Gabriel acknowledges that for Scorsese "maybe Christ's redemption has bled into his own. And there's an element, perhaps, of that for me, but I don't think it's a motivating force.

"There's a Catholic priest who uses 'Solsbury Hill' and some of the other songs for his masses. Yet I've had some other letters from people condemning me as a devil worshipper, so I suppose it's in the eye of the beholder."

Gabriel's faith is in the secular religion of psychology. Reader of Jung, friend of R.D. Laing, Gabriel has often said that his work is best understood as a kind of therapy. I suggest that there must be more to it than that, that individual skill and intellectual gifts cannot be discounted. He disagrees, leading me through Art-Brut, Van Gogh and graphology, reinforcing at each point the artistic value of subliminal emotional forces. I maintain that art as therapy only has value to the artist, whereas his work seems to have real, objective value. "Then you're talking about work as goal versus work as therapy," he nods. "But for me work is the goal—good work. And I feel better as a result of it. You know, if I get depressed I go running, I sweat, and the change of mood is the byproduct of my decision to go running."

Yeah, but nobody puts a frame around you running. "But if I could sell that, I'd be quite happy to," he laughs. Slippery. I





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object to the notion that neurosis drives the art. Can't the artist do some of the driving himself through will? "But is will a noble god, which we create," Gabriel asks, "or is it a vital weed that grows and feeds on our neuroses? Maybe will can be a healthy expression, but I know for a lot of successful people, as in my own case, there's a sacrifice in your personal life, because you can become obsessed with your work and making that work. What looks good and healthy in one situation may also be unhealthy when seen from the other side."

I bring up *talent* and he becomes Peter Gabriel, Art Educator. He brings up motivational theories, denounces teachers for discouraging creativity in young kids, mentions some hypnotized Czechoslovakian musicians who played over their heads when they believed they were famous composers, and otherwise celebrates the artistic potential of Joe and Jane Average. Okay, Peter, so you're not an elitist, but you are kind of elite. Few if any of those creative, therapeutically relieved people out there you're encouraging are going to produce your level of work. Gabriel finally says something nice about his abilities: "Oh, I think I'm good at doing some things, no doubt. I have confidence in some of what I do. In a sense I'm a generalist, so I'm a jack of many trades, and the way I put them together is special. *But*, at the same time, I don't think it's as hard to do as a lot of people tend to believe. We have a lot of inhibitors in the society around us. And society's very good at applying a sort of wet-sponge effect so that sparks are killed by this big sponge that says, 'Don't stick your neck above the rest of us. Don't think you're better than us!' And I think it's one of the things that makes England special. It's because the spark has to be so solid and the heat has to be so intense to actually be alive under this sponge. Individuality and craziness are

actually helped by the forces of oppression."

Well, speaking of neurotically propelled art, what about painter Lionel Dobie from Scorsese's *Life Lessons*, the opening section of *New York Stories*, a film Gabriel actually appears in for about... "I think it's a glorious 20 seconds." He laughs. "I think I ended up on the cutting-room floor! No, I was just hanging around the film because Rosanna [Arquette, Gabriel's girlfriend] was in it. So it was partly a joke I was put in."

The artist in the film is completely obsessed with Rosanna

## REAL WORLD FANTASIES

**T**HE main room at Peter Gabriel's Real World studios sports an SSL SL40006 console and Otari MTR-90 and DTR-90 multi-track tape machines. There's also a Studer A-820 and A-802, the latter for mastering. Main house amps and monitors are by Boxer, while Quad amps and ATC speakers are also used. Heavy digital firepower comes from the WaveFrame and Fairlight III workstations, parked next to an ordinary Roland D-50. An E-mu Emulator III is in use in another studio room. For drums, Gabriel's now using the Roger Linn box from Akai as well as two Wendell Jrs. Gabriel's fave mike has always been the Neumann valve U-47.

There are stacks of outboard gear. The digital effects include lots of Lexicons (a 480L with Larc, PCM-70 and two PCM-42s), Yamahas (a Rev 5 and three SPX90s), some fancy AMSes, an old Quantec, a Roland DEP-5 and an Ibanez SDR-1000. (And don't forget Hugh Padgham's ancient Boss CE-300 chorus.) Compressors are by dbx, Urei, Klark-Technic and BSS, with EQs by t.c. and Klark-Technic and noise gates by Drawmer and BSS. A Sony DAT deck is used for premixes.

Over in Gabriel's cottage sit a Korg SG-1D piano, an Akai S1000 sampler, TOA D-4 and D-4E mixers, another SDR-1000 reverb and a Shure SM57 mike. An H&H V8000 powers Yamaha NS10Ms.

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Arquette and uses that boiling emotion to produce huge paintings which are important and successful. "But is the man? That is the question. Yeah, maybe there are some connections. There is something in that stereotype, and I think, for me, it's harder to get my personal life working than it is to get my music working. But I'm also setting about that determinedly—and I think that's a very un-English activity as well!

"But I think there's a light side, too. I mean, this tortured soul business can get very boring. There's part of me that feels pleasure, fun and good humor. In the control room, dancing with Youssou,

mucking around trying to learn a few steps, I just feel like a happy kid sometimes. So, you know, the grand romantic vision is overplayed a lot."

Don't you really believe in that myth? We all believe it, we're trained to believe it. "That's right. And there's a lot of bullshit to that, and it's very attractive to buy it. But I think it eats itself up, and you get the sort of self-destructive rock 'n' roll cliché. The story of Sid Vicious is the classic one, or Janis Joplin. But then you get a guy like Keith Richards."

We are moving through other weighty subjects when I notice that the tape recorder has stopped. Argh, the report-

er's nightmare! I tell him how embarrassed I am. "That's okay, it happens to me in the studio all the time. All my crew people think I'm jinxed. Technology, when it gets near me, ceases to function. And as soon as anyone who's capable of fixing it is in the room, everything works properly."

Gabriel may characterize himself as a techno-klutz, but there are few artists who understand and get so much out of technology. His functional musical instruments are keyboard, flute and drums, but he's quick to downplay his skills. "My keyboard playing is fairly pedestrian, but it sort of builds the mood sometimes, and that's what I write with. I'm a bit of a thumper. But it's good to know what you can do and work within it." As for his drumming, despite his experience playing in a trad jazz band and an R&B combo, he notes, "I was an appalling drummer. But I get great pleasure from it. On this soundtrack there was this great groove a group from the Ivory Coast was playing, and I had my drum and was banging my heart out, really getting in the groove and feeling so happy."

Gabriel also lights up on the subject of tuned percussion, which has gradually increased in importance in his work: "Oh, I love tuned drums! Not just tuned drums, but tuned percussion, tuned rhythm. There's this wonderful thing that you learn very quickly when you have a drum machine on which you can program the tuning: The mood of the song changes totally according to where you pitch the drums. I still think a lot of people don't know that and haven't tried it in spite of having all this equipment. We'll often, like on *Passion*, bring down a rhythm track and put it through a harmonizer to see where it sits. Or if you don't want that rough, digital quality of the harmonizer, maybe then you slow the tape speed down or have someone re-play it with the drums tuned differently."

Rhythmically speaking, he has growing reservations about the machines. "I like to hear more people-controlled elements and construction. I like the fluctuation of bona fide humans. There are immense freedoms that technology brings, which I love. But I think too much of it gets used because it's an easier way to get a polished result, rather than what is necessarily the best approach for that particular piece of writing. They're fantastic writing tools. Very nice to play around with, but I wouldn't like my daughter to marry one."

Defining exactly what Gabriel's skills are can be difficult, but when he gets into

CONTINUED ON PAGE 118

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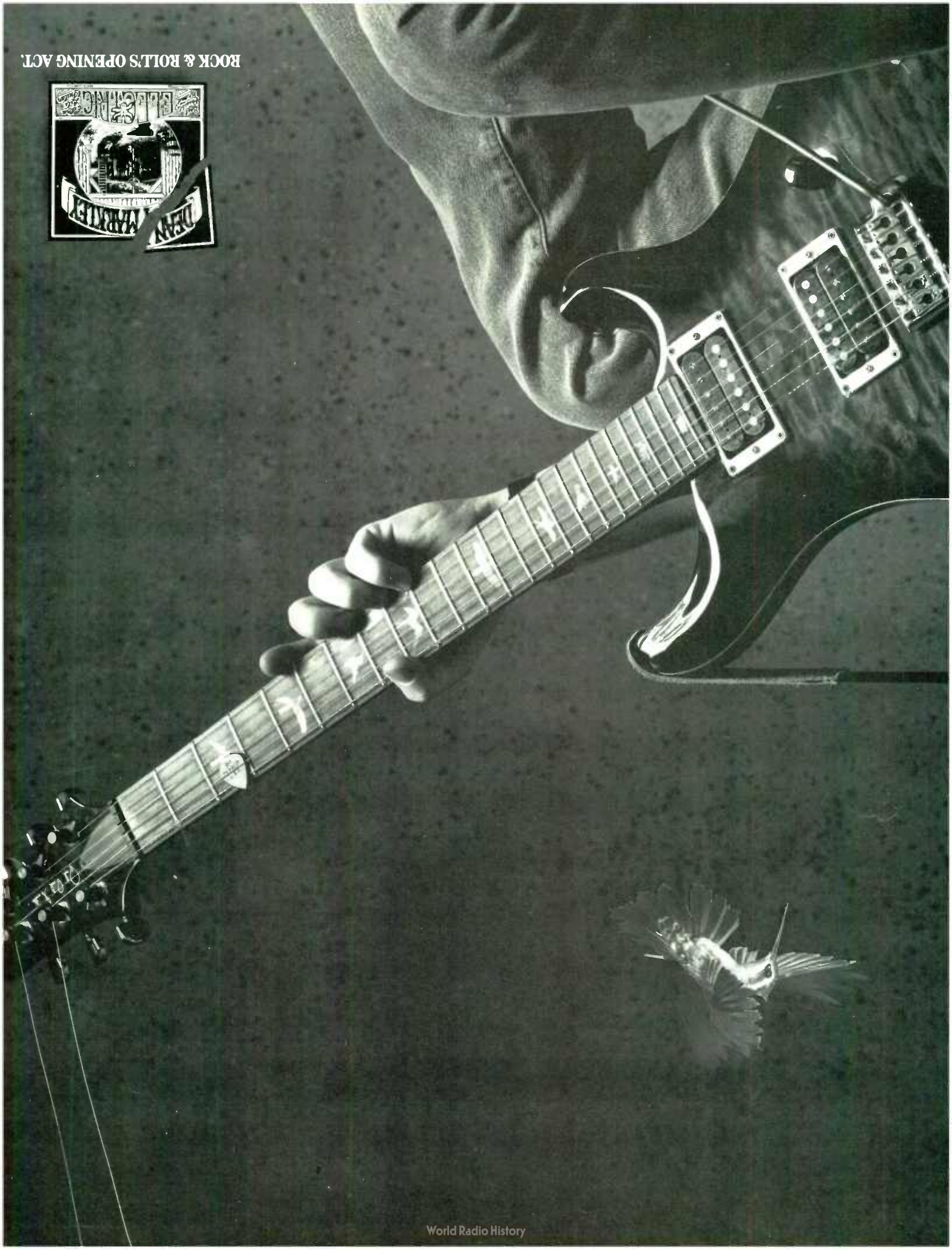
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# HÜSKER WHÖ?

## BOB MOULD

**BURIES HIS BAND  
AND COMES UP FOR AIR**

**BY JIM MAGNIE**

**I**T WAS THE MOST MANIC point in the band's lifespan and what's the flipside of that? When things are the absolute best they're the absolute worst. Hüsker Dü was a great band but, man, I made a really good record, too. I'm happy for once in my life." Bob Mould is clearing the air, getting his grief out in the open. "I guess the bottom line is, when you don't feel like your songs are being appreciated by the other people you work with and you're not appreciating their songs, maybe it's time that everybody goes their own way."

It's been a long time since last I laid eyes on Mould, and here, in Manhattan on a snowy winter afternoon, he doesn't quite look the same. Then again, how could he? Last time, he was onstage in a New England nightclub, singing, sputtering, spewing with a fury that made his face stretch out with a visible tinge of terror. In his hands was his electric guitar, a simple instrument that he always employs when attempting to split universes in two. That, of course, is a

tough gig; absolute success requires a consolidated team effort. And for the

better part of this decade, Mould was a third of a radical team effort, a little outfit called Hüsker Dü. But hey, you already know all about how Mould, drummer Grant Hart and bassist Greg Norton ripped, rigged and panicked together, reestablishing a transplendent viciousness in rock. At their apex, they were the ultimate indie unit, bringing the visceral extremities of hardcore into the melodic realm of pop. Like most kids, they were initially





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content with just causing earthquakes, setting new G-force standards, leveling city blocks. But as they grew—and they grew damn quick—the Hüskers raised their broad bass/guitar/drums sword and cut a vicious swath through adult themes of doubt and loneliness, celebration and camaraderie.

Last year the rumble ceased, the spewing stopped. The band broke up. Perhaps that's why Mould, one-time

implosion module, blast furnace personified, looks different. Today, sitting in the fastest city on Earth, the moon-faced man with the full-time brain is not only calm, but downright beatific. Given his rep as the ultimate angst-monger, this mood takes some getting used to.

The same could be said for the singer/songwriter's first solo record, *Workbook*, which has just been released by Virgin. Where the Hüskers roared with an unflagging storm



**“People enjoy watching you tear yourself apart.”**

force, Mould’s new material is based around acoustic guitars, making room for filigreed subtleties and stylistic nuance. It’s an avenue he’s been dying to examine for years. There does, however, remain one constant: the purging feeling of catharsis that has been a staple in Mould’s music since we all first met him back in the Hüskers’ *Land Speed Record* days. It doesn’t matter whether he’s plugged in or not, highly emotional lay-it-on-the-line rock is what Bob Mould is all about.

*Workbook*, which attempts to sort out Mould’s feelings about the breakup of Hüsker Dü, was conceived after Bob moved out of his home in Minneapolis proper to a small town in the Minnesota countryside. He needed isolation to get through the emotional debris of the band’s final explosion.

“It was a tough record to make,” he admits with a sigh, “because things have been so confusing of late. I’ve been going through a bit of the old ‘Who is Bob and what is Bob capable of?’ thing. But I’ve tried to make myself a bit clearer to listeners; I want people to hear it first-hand, true and focused. With this one, there should be no interference; I’m going to take all the credit or the blame. When you offer up the real deal, you gotta stand with both sides of it.”

Why did the Hüskers split? Outside interference can’t be the answer; the band was seemingly autonomous. For years they called all their own shots, handling virtually every aspect of their collective persona: recordings, LP art, bookings, marketing. They even accepted the gas-and-go chores when it came time for the non-stop crisscross tours of the U.S.A. that were their lifeblood. These rampant do-it-yourself tactics could add up to a big case of overwork, and as Mould begins to recount the Hüskers’ last days, you can hear a weariness work into his voice. A recent article in *Spin* gave drummer Grant

Hart a chance to tell his version of the split, and though Bob hasn’t seen it, he’s gotten some feedback from those who have. It kind of ruffles whatever feathers he’s got left. As we become more comfortable with each other, Mould starts to let down a few of the walls around him.

“I’m not real big on spreading my poisons in public,” he warns, “especially when it’s fresh poison. And I probably never will read these other articles; I don’t need to be told what happened, I *know* what happened. But setting the record straight will be important to Hüsker fans. So let’s do it.

“A friend of ours, [Hüsker manager] David Savoy, committed suicide on the eve of us leaving for the *Warehouse* tour, and it sort of threw everything into a tizzy. The only way we could deal with it was to go back out there and play. That’s when I started realizing that, shit, maybe this thing is a little too intense for any of us. If it’s starting to take people, you know? It was beginning to be the most manic part of the band’s lifespan. I couldn’t quite put my finger on it, but things were sour and everybody was acting real different.

“We ended a summer tour in ’87, split off from each other for about a month, and came back different people. Grant was not well. He didn’t look healthy. Greg was sort of going in his own direction and I was in my own world too. We got together to work on songs and nothing clicked. In the past, we could’ve knocked off 20 songs in three weeks. Grant didn’t make any secret out of his heroin use; I’d known about it for a while, but hoped it would play itself out. He was never one for going from point to point like most people, but that’s fine, he has a really creative mind. But the gaps kept getting wider and wider and you couldn’t find the real him and you couldn’t understand what he was talking about. It got to the point where it was completely interfering with the work.

“Columbia, Missouri is where it fell into the toilet. We’d done a show and our sound guy was crying at the board. He could see that it was over. We got off the stage and Grant just about made it into the dressing room. Greg and I looked at each other and said, ‘Who’s going to kill him first?’ We went upstairs and had a long talk, deciding that we weren’t going to play any more shows until everything got straightened out. We were supposed to do an AIDS benefit in New York a little bit later, but we hadn’t rehearsed, and our manager, who doesn’t take any crap from anyone, canceled it. And I went, ‘Phew.’”

Personal deterioration wasn’t the only monster preying on the Hüsker camp; there were creative frustrations working on the trio as well. The band had a trademark sound, a nonstop expulsion that echoed the dizzying state of the ’80s culture they lived in. Throughout several records for the SST and Warner Bros. labels, they honed their hurricane to perfection. By the time of their watershed *Warehouse: Songs and Stories*, they’d refined their approach to its ultimate destination, allowing room for both scathing sonics and poised clarity. Mould was anxious to try out new ideas.

“The songs were getting better, but the sound was the same,” he says. “It was choking us and I wanted to work with a different engineer, who would have new ears. I kept saying, ‘New studio, new engineer.’ With those guys, it was like, ‘Do you think we could try a different microphone for a change?’ And the response was, ‘What? Are you crazy? It’s worked so well for so long, leave it alone.’ I just wanted to make it a challenge again.

“And it wasn’t Warners pushing us in any direction,” he reminds. “They signed us because of our rep as independent and self-supportive, and because Grant and I were good songwriters. Why would they fuck with that? I was sort of hoping that the next record would have a bigger sound because Grant’s a good keyboard player. It was a good time to get rid of





**“WITH THIS ONE I’M GOING TO TAKE ALL THE CREDIT OR ALL THE BLAME. WHEN YOU OFFER UP THE REAL DEAL, YOU GOTTA STAND WITH BOTH SIDES OF IT.”**

WARING ABBOTT

some of the guitars, and I kept telling them I wanted to play more acoustic, that I was getting tired of that sound.

“The only response I got was blah blah blah; that was all Grant was saying. Everyone around him was frustrated. It was like, ‘C’mon, be Grant again, don’t be this monster you’re turning into.’ It was killing me to see him killing himself. Finally I didn’t care if we worked together anymore, I just didn’t want to see him die. I heard rumors he was going to start another band, and said, to myself, ‘Cool. I’ll make it official. Somebody has to have some guts in this fucking band, let’s quit dicking around.’ I called the manager’s office and said, ‘I quit, I’m hitting a brick wall and I’m not going to climb it.’ That was January 26th, 1988. I called Greg and told him; he just let out this big sigh of relief, saying, ‘Thank God somebody had the guts, I just couldn’t do it.’ I called Grant but he wasn’t around. I ran into him a week later and we talked for about 10 minutes. It was over.”

The ever-open Grant Hart recalls the band’s final days this way: “David’s death was the start,” he says sadly. “It was devastating in many ways, but it certainly caused new business relationships, which I couldn’t handle. It made Bob turn more toward the business thing, whereas I always thought the label was supposed to be working for you. Further, it sent me back into the junk. I kept my end up as far as band commitments were concerned, but obviously junk is no way to solve your problems. Basically, I had to get out of the band to quit junk. But the end of Hüsker Dü was inevitable. I mean, how many friends from high school do you hang around with these days?”

Hart, whose new record *Kick a Hole in It* is due from SST in the next few months, is trying to get his life back on line. He’s got a new band and, with a gallery opening ahead, is returning to the visual arts as well. “I’ll tell you, cocaine is like the boy scouts and smack is black. It can be very black, in fact; I saw some darkness. But except for a couple of relapses, I’ve been clean for eight months. I learned how not to develop an oil-burning habit. And nobody from that scene is in my new band. As a matter of fact, our drummer is super-clean, kind of a den mother type. During the sound check the other night he asked, ‘We’re all playing this gig straight, right?’ I play rhythm guitar in my new group; it’s more of a rock ‘n’ roll thing rather than everyman’s intellectual band.”

MOULD IS CHAIN-SMOKING Kents and drinking fruit juice. A vegetarian who admits to being a bit obsessive, it was he who mapped out all the logistics for the band over the years. “That earned me the reputation of being the fucking asshole who cracks the whip all the time, but it was only because no one else would step up and take charge with me. I didn’t want to be a boss, just a third of the band. But whoever bears the brunt of the responsibility is going to be the bad guy. I don’t care. I just don’t want people to think that I’m going around saying, ‘I quit because of that fucking dope fiend.’ That’s not it at all; I wouldn’t have worked with him for nine years if I didn’t care about him and love his work. He’s a great singer and songwriter and talented guy when he’s focused, and no one will ever take that away. I quit because we had done everything we pretty much could do together. And a lot of it was cool.”

No brag, just fact. A lot of what the Hüskers did accomplish in their nine-year run *was* cool. They made essential moves in defining what heights the power of rock could be lifted to here in the heads-down, get-out-of-the-way segment of the twentieth century. Although it lacked the hollow rhetoric and vapid stance of most hardcore cadres, their warp-speed approach was initially heard as such. But even as they helped script that genre’s aural tenets—double-dosage fury, noxious barre-chord mega-velocity—the band veered away from the

confrontational Us vs. Them ethic.

But certainly their aural clout was equaled by few. “That was before Metallica, and if you wanted something to just blow your head off, there was nothing like it,” says Mould. “They were always asking the question, ‘When’s Bob going to explode?’ But we were plagued. Every time we made a big step forward, people hated us more. *Everything Falls Apart* and *Metal Circus* carved out this audience that only wanted faster and louder all the time. I thought *Zen Arcade* put the lid on that and started showing where stuff was going. People thought we were selling out. At least that’s one thing I don’t have to worry about these days, ‘cause I sold out years ago. Hah!”

As the decade progressed, the impact the band had on its minions began to be felt. Everyone from Soul Asylum to Squirrelbait came under the band’s umbrella, but Mould notes that they weren’t the only ones to put a formidable blare over a catchy melody. “There were lots of good bands doing the same thing,” he says. “Mission of Burma and Wire cut the same path. Black Flag did too in their own way. With us there was no thinking about it, once it happened we just started refining it.



**Hart, Mould and Norton—just before the earthquake.**

Make the drums, guitar, cymbals, vocals all bigger. Just stack it up. I think *Zen Arcade* is incredible at that. But our best record is *Flip Your Wig*, because that’s where Grant and I buckled down as songwriters.”

Did Mould ever think others were ripping off the Hüsker sound? “I like that idea of convergent evolution,” he quips, “like-minded events happening completely unrelated to each other in the same time and space. There are still bands that are coming up yet with a variation on our sound. I heard a couple this year that are spitting images. Actually I’m glad there are people out there who appreciate that sound, because I don’t have it in me 24 hours a day anymore. I’ve got bursts of it in my soul, but that’s it.”

Anyone who ever saw the band live won’t soon forget the level of intensity they maintained. “For anything that was hell in your life, you could go up on that stage for an hour-and-a-half and no one could touch you. That was my escapism, dealing with my demons in public. People enjoy watching you physically tear yourself apart in front of them. Maybe that’s a fantasy for me. Maybe I can kill myself every night. Not like Alice Cooper, but just tear a little shit out of my life and get on to the next day.”

Like most breakups, the purge felt both good and bad to Mould, and you can hear the resulting spread sheet of emotion throughout *Workbook*’s continually changing stylistic palette. Following up on his goals, it’s an acoustic-oriented excursion that doesn’t trade off on the power the Mould name has come to signify. The huge whomp of drummer Anton Fier propels the guitarist’s mix of strings, which include the electric bass work of Pere Ubu’s Tony Maimone and the cello lines of Tiny Lights’ Jane Scarpantoni. On one hand he’s obviously glad to be away from the debilitating rigors of a democracy. (“I’m a fairly happy guy these days,” he gushes during the interview.) You can hear it in the opening instrumental, “Sunspots,” which sounds slightly African in its folksy, finger-picked joyousness. On the other hand, sorting out the death of the Hüskers couldn’t have been the most jubilant of tasks, and you can hear the venom come to the surface in “Poison Years.” As Mould bellows out the lyrics—“Treason is the reason. . . the more I think about it, the less I’ve got to say about these poison years”—the full-tilt schematic of the Hüskers comes to mind. Mould would often purge himself of frustrations and anger by railing away through the band’s din, and “Poison Years” stands in a long line of Hüsker catharsis-o-tunes. “It makes ‘Too Far Down’ sound like ‘Do You Know the Way to San Jose?’” he laughs. “The imagery is a bit more succinct.” Lyrically he’s the same knotty worry wart that we’ve grown to respect. “Yeah, this one’s as personal as personal gets for me,” he agrees. “It’s going to be a real challenge to get more naked than I did here. I’m still not completely comfortable with people hearing it yet. All the sores are still open.”

Yet for the most part, *Workbook* indicates a kinder, gentler Bob Mould. He spent the farm days during his year-long retreat the same way he did while living as a city dweller: working incessantly. The house was littered with new-found instruments including dulcimers, pianos and mandolins. He just grabbed the songs as they came rolling out of his mind. “Some that floated by were great—I hope those are the ones that made it to the record—and some were horseshit. But every good writer knows when to take the paper out of the typewriter and throw it in the wastepaper basket. But I think anybody who’s got any longevity, and I can’t speak for Philip Glass or Steve Reich, but people who have been doing it for 25 or 30 years, don’t sit around and watch cartoons all day. They’re at work at nine in the morning and they’ve got an agenda. That’s the way I want to be.

“With the Hüskers it was a big wall of sound, real claustrophobic. Our sound reflected the environment we worked in. With the new thing, I was sitting 60 miles away from anybody I knew making all these demos with all this sky around me, and I didn’t know if I was out in space or not. I’m used to people going, ‘Yeah, Hüsker Dü, ground-breakers, trend-setters.’ When all the songs were done I realized, ‘Oh shit, I’m going to have to play these for people now; are they going to think I’m nuts?’”

That conclusion should be reached only by those who think that time changes nothing. Yet even while the record represents Mould’s greatest musical change-up, if you look closely, the formal stylistic shifts are minimal. *Workbook* is what the songs of Bob the Hüsker were beginning to sound like during the *Warehouse* era. The new tunes simply offer what Hüsker naysayers always claimed they lacked: a sense of dynamics.

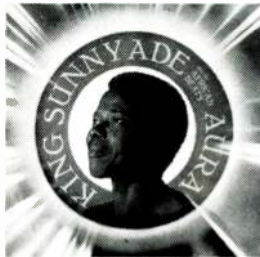
“It was exciting for me, and a little nerve-wracking too, to work in a whole different environment,” Mould says. “I think I finally got a grip on what makes me happy in songwriting, in delivering a sound. I think there’s more going on here than in my earlier tunes. I want it thick, but not overstuffed.” “Wishing Well” starts with circular strums that ring, ring, ring.



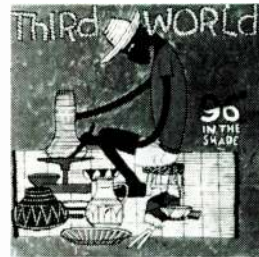
# 96° IN THE SHADE



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 SOUND D'AFRIQUE VOL II VARIOUS ARTISTS



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But as Jane Scarpantoni's cello darts around offering harmonic counterpoints, the tension begins to mount. Between the controlled feedback and the final unleashing of Mould's low-register electric rant, you've got a full-blown captivating track.

One of the tactics that brings Mould closer to that goal is the addition of the cello: "I'd been listening to a lot of classical music, just turning on the radio and leaving it on a classical station; I just absorbed it. But I realized a couple of years ago that the cello is a real powerful instrument. For some of the songs I heard strings, but not the kind of milky

strings in the sense of 'World at War,' you know?"

In a few ways Scarpantoni's bowing recalls the feedback rush of the Hüskers. "Well, it's sort of mandatory that anybody who works with me know how to make their instrument drone real well. Maybe the next thing is a set of bagpipes I've got at home. They weren't in good enough shape for this record—maybe next time."

It's not only Mould's lyrics that razor their way through the swirl of strings; Fier's drumming gets a few deep cuts in there too. Even as he's lifting the songs, the premeditated splashes keep the

action level high. Precision is one of the tenets of '70s rock that Fier revels in. "Anton's a perfectionist," deadpans Mould. "It's very challenging to work with someone like that; he's absolutely concerned with accents, phrasing, dynamics, the whole thing."

This well-rounded combination of new faces and new studios raised the music's energy level a lot. "I had everything pretty much the way I wanted it, and we went into Paisley Park and banged the thing out. Then we went to Grog Kill, in upstate New York. The vibe was ideal, because all the songs were written in the country, no horns honking, nobody yelling. It was wild just to go up there with an engineer and sing your brains out and play your hands off. I thought about doing the record alone, but that's wrong. If there's no one there to kick you in the ass, you can really get self-indulgent, fool yourself into thinking that everything's great when it's not. You got somebody like Anton playing drums, you play a bit harder yourself. You got an instrumentalist as sophisticated as Tony, you pay attention."

But of course the signature scrawl to all of *Workbook* is the leader's guitar. As much as he's smitten with subtleties lately, he makes them add up, giving almost every track a huge powerhouse effect. That's where the play of dynamics comes in. "It's a much better vehicle for that kind of thing," he concurs. "There's room for me to express different feelings and shades, not just a linear mode."

Yet Mould, who with the Hüskers blurred the lines between rhythm and lead effects by jamming them together in one nasty fireball, doesn't believe he's got what it takes to be a great guitarist. "I'm only alright. I can't play the flashy stuff, I just play what I hear and feel. That shit with the 10 fingers going at once doesn't interest me anyway. But I hear a lot of people doing my droning these days, copping my tonalities, using fifths, so maybe I made a dent in other ways. I just don't expect to be guitar player of the year, that's all."

Still, *Workbook* indicates a leap in Mould's ability to differentiate between brazen chording and nimble fingering. "I like that part of the new record," he muses. "It's almost getting close to longhair music, like Kottke or something. God, it's serious. But I aspire to that, like Richard Thompson, or someone who can really coax anything they want out of the instrument. *Really* play. This time it goes from 'Sunspots,' which is kind of lilting, to 'Whichever Way the Wind Blows,' a piece of feedback hell.

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WITH A FULL YEAR OFF, Mould the non-stop workaholic had a few other bits of time consumption on his agenda. Being the knowledgeable big brother that he is these days, he took a shot at some producing. *Down on the Floor* (Slash), the new record by Boston's Zulus, has been beefed up with the Mouldian punch. Of course, Bob has years of hands-on studio experience, but more importantly, he's a diehard rock music fan, and is happy to get behind any band he feels can use his help. "Working with the Zulus was fun. I remember listening to a tape they sent me when we were considering opening acts for the *Warehouse* tour. They didn't need much help, actually, they were pretty much together by the time we met up. But that's the way I produce: I don't know exactly what's going to work, so we just check things

out, offer suggestions. If something's not to the point, we'll ditch a bridge or two. I don't have a big reputation, but I have a fair idea of what sounds good."

"We wanted someone whose judgment we could trust," says Zulu Larry Bangor, "and that was Bob; he's a very sensible guy. My only fear was that I wanted to hear the vocals, which aren't particularly featured on the Hüsker albums. But he said, 'Yeah, of course!' He had ideas about our music that were revelations to us, many different ways around problems."

Mould's other project of the day is S.O.L. Records, a Singles-Only Label

designed to spotlight deserving artists and celebrate that ultimate rock 'n' roll format, the 45. "We don't anticipate keeping acts on there for nine years or anything," he laughs. "The label's meant to springboard people. There are a few releases to start with: the Wormjets from N.Y.C., Dave Postlethwaite from Minneapolis, Friction Wheel from Hoboken and Angel Dean, a woman who used to sing with Last Roundup. I'm mostly just an A&R guy, sorting out people and their projects."

Perhaps this is a throwback to Bob's kid days, when his dad would bring home tons of used jukebox singles. It's one of

## BOB'S WAREHOUSE

**G**UITARS, guitars, guitars, that's what Bob Mould's into. "I kind of like talking about the equipment," he says, ditching any remaining ties to the bash-it-out aspect of hardcore. "Actually I'm from the old school, I'll play any guitar, but if it doesn't feel right after 10 seconds, I won't deal with it. I know guys who go down to the shop and try out this pickup and that tremolo system. With me, it's like, man, if the guitar stays in tune and it plays right, you can do whatever you want to make it sound the way you want. It's got to play itself."

His longtime pal was an Ibanez Flying V, so he thinks "it will surprise people to know I've switched over to Strats these days. Also I've used a Yamaha APX12, a stereo acoustic/electric guitar, which I like a bit. Also there's a Washburn six-string acoustic/electric. I don't use a big wall of amps like you might think, just two Fender Concerts, each with a 12" speaker; you get a lot tighter sound with just that. There are some antiquated distortion boxes. Sometimes I don't even use amps, I just direct them into the board. The old MXR Distortion Plus. I have five or six of them. Vocals, it was AKG 414 because my voice has a tendency to get real resonant in the nasal cavity and the 414 has a good bite to it. I like the brighter mikes to bring out the consonants."

Plus there's a cheap old mandolin, a Hammond B-3 and a Steinway grand. "I got one synthesizer at home; I think we used it for about four seconds on the record. It's a Roland D-50, and it gave us some bell sounds at the end of 'See a Little Light.' There were Indian bells as well to close the record out; I think they're copper or bronze."

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the things that got him interested in pop. "Around '65, '66, '67, that's when I got hooked," he confesses. "I'd memorize how long the songs were, who wrote 'em and what label they were on. I remember loving the Motown stuff, but not understanding why there were three labels, Tamla, Gordy and Motown. The Monkees and the Beatles were my favorite groups. I had one of those plastic organs that you'd plug in; I wrote a lot of bad songs on that." The man who once recorded the theme to the "Mary Tyler Moore Show" cements his yen for trashy pop fluff by confessing that he owns scads of truck-driving 45s like "Give Me 40 Acres and I'll Turn This Rig Around" and "The Interstate Is Coming Through My Outhouse." "Yeah," he beams, "those things are great."

THERE'S NOTHING FLUFFY about *Workbook*. As usual, Bob Mould is looking into himself, seeing what's actually happened, what's actually happening and standing tall to it. "I just can't write a happy song all the time," he shrugs. "On this record, there is some optimistic stuff, 'See a Little Light' and such, but I just deal better with reality. And much of it is negative. I don't alter my perception

anymore; I don't drink or do drugs. Not that there's anything wrong with that in moderation. It's just that I can't do it in moderation, so I don't do it at all. I'm the kind of guy who, when miserable, doesn't go down to the bar, but stays home and stares into the mirror and gets more miserable until the stuff sorts itself out. And I like it that way."

In his usual matter-of-fact demeanor, Mould lays out some of the problems that used to chase him around. "I used to do a lot of speed, I've never done acid. I never had a problem with drinking; I've certainly had one without drinking. But I've tapered all that down, cut it out. I see enough things with my own two eyes without adding to the list."

Quite obviously this is one punk rocker who's in it for the long run. "I just want to get out there and play," he concludes. "I love being onstage. I don't know if I can stand there with an acoustic the whole night, some of those quieter songs can be forceful—if we can pull them off. I'm hoping that the studio band will be the stage band too, because we've been rehearsing and I'll tell you, one more notch on the amp and some stuff is going to move. Maybe it will be the first 'An Evening with' show that will knock some buildings over." ☒

## akLAFf from page 87

you get to that next level, that's when it's important—when it's changing people's lives. I try to concentrate on that element of the jazz experience."

While akLaff has chatted, and the level of the corn nut bowl diminished, the Knitting Factory's been filling up. In five minutes he'll be onstage searching for cosmic consciousness with Sharrock, Speller, bassist Melvin Gibbs and synth player Dave Snyder. Time for one last question, though, about his spacious cymbal sound.

"Cymbals? The cymbal is the extension of the bell, the African bell. The act of flattening its sound out, to hold it back, I find that charming. And that's what bells are to do, to charm. And I'm one charming.... Well, I'm a charmer. I was going to say I'm a charming mother-fucker, but I can't. 'Cause my mother's gonna want to read this. And she'll say, [*shifts to a matronly falsetto*] 'You know you didn't have to use all those bad words.'" He laughs again, and picks up his sticks. ☒

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See page 118.



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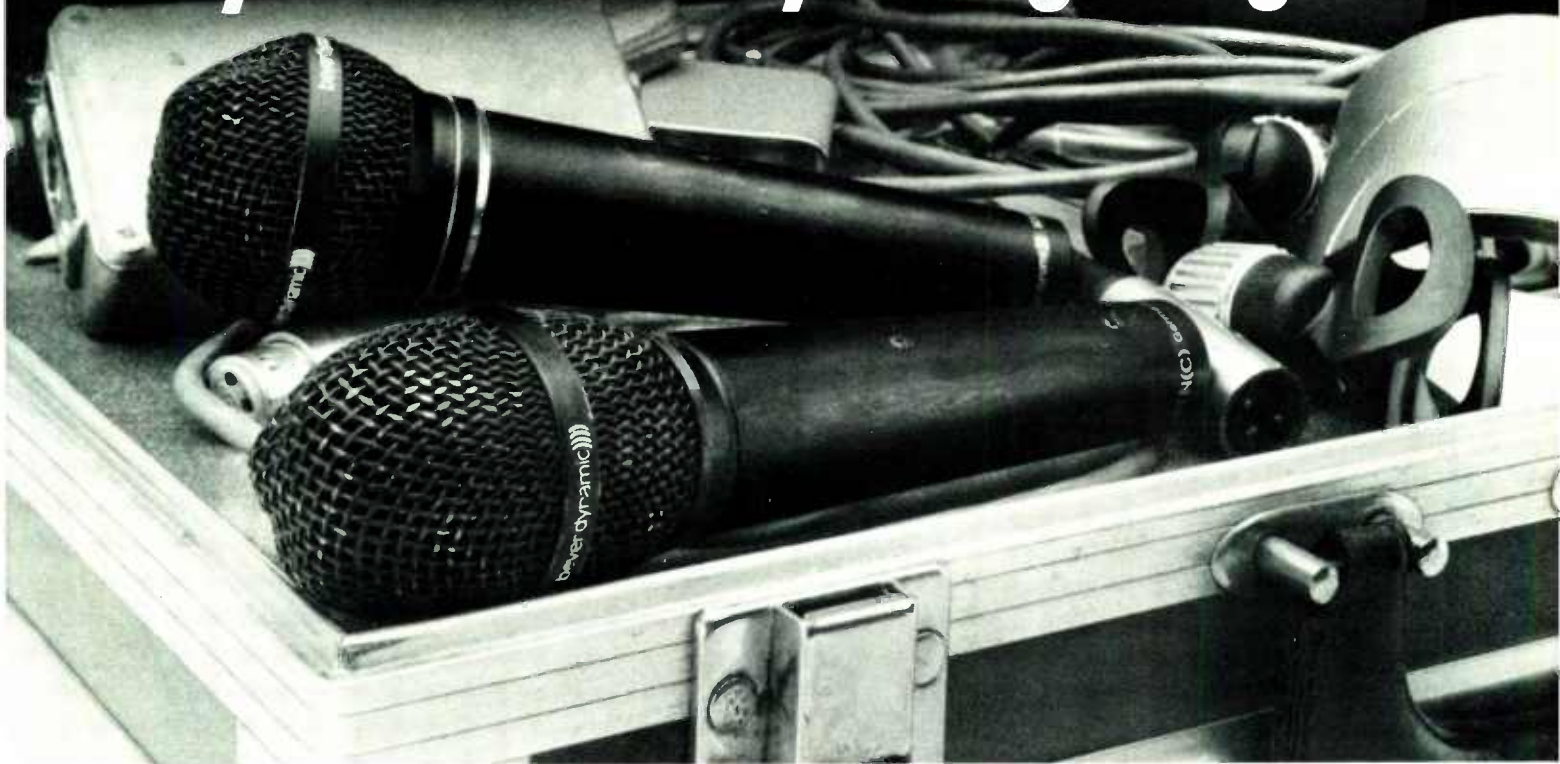


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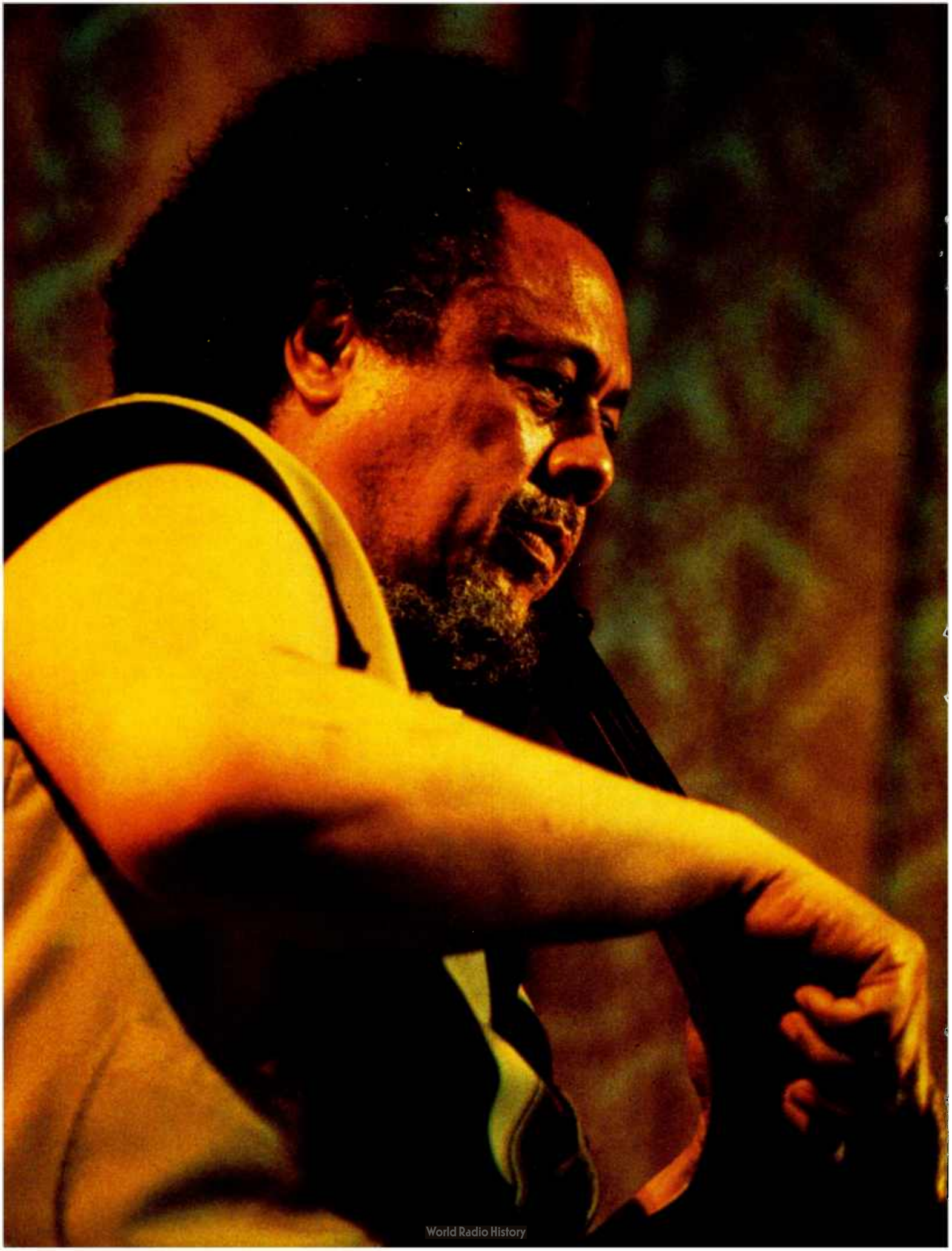
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# THE BLACK SAINT'S EPITAPH

Unpublished Reflections  
by Charles Mingus

Article by Tom Moon  
Interviews by Stephen Davis



**O**FTEN IN JOURNALISM—as in medicine and music—the important discoveries are made by accident. No one at *Musician* knew that the late Charles Mingus decided, a few years before his 1979 death, to set down his theories of music and his memoirs of the great players he'd known.

Certainly no one suspected that this precious American cultural history was sitting in boxes in Mingus' widow's apartment.

In mid-1988 Eliot Hubbard, an Epic Records executive, invited *Musician's* Bill Flanagan and Peter Watrous to join him for dinner with his friend Sue Mingus. It was a social evening, not a business meeting. Mrs. Mingus talked about her late husband's unperformed symphony, which musical archeologist Gunther Schuller was preparing for a debut in June of 1989. The two writers pestered her for stories about Charles—the jazz giant almost as legendary for

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID REDFERN/RETNA

his wild personality as for his musical genius. They asked about the story that the published version of *Beneath the Underdog*, Mingus' uninhibited 1971 autobiography, contained only a fraction of his original manuscript. She said that was true, the book had been cut to ribbons by its editors; she had all Mingus' outtakes—which were substantially longer than the official book. The eyes of the *Musician* editors lit up. Would she consider letting the magazine have a look at those lost pages? Sure, she said, but since it's *Musician* you might prefer the other book Mingus was working on—his unfinished book about music.

"His what?"

Mrs. Mingus explained that in the mid-'70s Charles began serious work on a book about musicians and music. He wrote out some parts and others were dictated into a tape recorder. None of the material was ever published. Mingus died in 1979 after a difficult illness. The book was forgotten. Now Mrs. Mingus' energies were directed toward staging the long-delayed symphony, *Epitaph. Musician*, of course, lunged for the book. Could we publish excerpts?

Once Mrs. Mingus approved the project, the magazine asked jazz writer Tom Moon to take over the nuts and bolts of assembling the material and preparing it for publication. Moon met with Sue Mingus a number of times, sorted through the work and selected sections for these excerpts. As the project took on its final shape the magazine became concerned about the presence of a second, unidentified voice asking Mingus questions on the tapes. Who was this interviewer—and would he make a claim to copyright on the interviews? Mrs. Mingus said that the second voice was a fellow who had worked for her (at *Fusion* magazine) who she and Charles invited to St. Martin to help Mingus get his memory rolling. She said that he had stayed only a few days, and that she and Charles always retained ownership of the material. What was his name? Stephen Davis.

Mrs. Mingus, who does not follow rock 'n' roll, did not know that Stephen Davis had gone on to write *Hammer of the Gods*, one of the most popular rock books ever. He might have been a sidekick in 1976, but now he was a heavyweight—and if he wanted he could put the kibosh on the whole project by contesting ownership of the interviews.

We contacted Davis, explained the situation and held our breath. Davis said he knew that for financial reasons he could claim ownership—but that he loved Charles Mingus and would not stand in the way of his words seeing print at last. So with a

generosity to reward any music lover and appall any literary agent, Davis gave his blessing. He also offered us his memories of being with Mingus in '76:

"Charles Mingus and I recorded these interviews in January 1976 on the island of St. Martin in the West Indies. Charles, his wife Susan and drummer/alter ego Dannie Richmond were

living in a beachfront condo owned by Fantasy Records' Saul Zaentz. The idea was for Charles to get some rest, lose some weight and get some history down on tape for a sequel to *Beneath the Underdog*.

"Working conditions were unusual. Mingus stayed awake all night, communing with the spirits that surrounded him. In the morning he would pace around in his silk robe, a colossal Havana supremo propped in his huge fingers. The house overlooked sunny tennis courts and smelled of Cuban cigars and Peruvian cocaine. Mingus was taking lithium to keep away the blues and stayed away from the glaring tropical sun. We often talked in the shade by the pool, Mingus sustaining himself with cigars and piña colada. He liked to sleep in the late afternoons, then rise and work on a soundtrack project (music for the Italian suspense film *Todo Modo*) before going

out to dinner. His great bulk had increased lately and was starting to hurt his back, which kept him awake at night. In the early hours I could hear him in the next room singing to himself, and murmuring snatches of conversation with the shades and apparitions that were so real for him at night.

"St. Martin was a terrible place for Mingus to lose weight. Every evening we would pack into his rented Pinto and he'd drive us over the island's spine to the French side for a sumptuous feast. His favorite restaurant was called La Calanque, which means a pirate's cove. Mingus would devour a couple of *homard gratiné* and order several bottles of vintage wine. He regaled us with his adventures while driving around the island at night. Once he drove past a graveyard on his way home, and noticed a woman in a red dress running behind the car, trying to catch up. Mingus floored it, and looked in his rearview mirror to see the woman in red sitting in the back seat, laughing at him. Finally he pulled up to the house, only to see the front door open and the woman in red beckon him in. Mingus said he blacked out at that point. When he came to in the morning he found a red kerchief in the back seat.

"Mingus paid the checks with crisp \$100 bills, and left big tips. He was generous, and lost no weight.

"One night, driving home from the restaurant, the car's



"I didn't 'discover' anything. It's been there all the time."



headlights fell on a pile of fresh earth near a construction site. 'Sue!' Mingus yelled and slammed on the brakes. 'That looks like it.' Mingus walked over to the dirt, picked up a little and tasted it. Susan explained that, as a small boy, Charles used to eat the earth of the front yard of the family house in Watts, and lately had become obsessed with trying to duplicate the taste he remembered so fondly. In the glare of the headlights, I could make out the huge shape of Mingus bent over the moist earth, trying to recapture the epiphanic sensations of childhood. He returned to the car, disappointed, a few moments later."



### MINGUS ON FREE JAZZ

I could go to work every night and not write any music, play in a different key and make up a new song each time. We did that at the Village Gate; the guys got the message and started playing and the audience loved it. But I don't enjoy playing like that. I enjoy playing something where everybody's creating together and where there's some ensemble. Free jazz also means that the guys all make up different lines. I do the same thing, but not on every tune. When they stopped playing bebop, they went to my waltz thing, they went to my extended form. Until free form came along, and free form was like the ending of my compositions. Like on "Haitian Fight Song": They took the form of the last movements of my compositions which I was writing, which were chaos, total chaos, because I was reaching for a climax, and then cooled the climax down. And they took those small movements and made different pieces out of them. I could do the same thing, but I enjoy music too much to plagiarize myself.

I know when somebody's fooling and when they're serious. For instance, if the free form guys could play the same tune twice, then I would say they were playing something. But they can't. Because most of the time they use their fingers on the saxophone and they don't even know what's gonna come out. They're experimenting. And experiments are supposed to be done at home and not in front of the public. How'd you like to have a doctor operate on you and tell you he's experimenting? That he's going to do it by ear? That he was an elevator operator before but he saw so many people suffering that he decided he wants to take out your kidneys. And says, "Don't worry about it. I'll put you to sleep and you won't know what's going on, but I'm going to do a good operation."

*But they might say, "We're artists, we have the right."*

No more than a doctor does, man. Of course they're going to defend themselves, but they have no right to go any further than they have studied in their theories and what they feel. They're a bunch of bullshitters. I know that I can't paint. Thelonious Monk can paint. As a kid I knew I couldn't paint. I could have gone back and thrown some rocks at the paper and got mad 'cause I can't paint and that's what these people are doing. That don't make it art.

One of George Shearing's ex-bass players lived in the same building I did in Harlem on Park Avenue and he had two sons—one played trumpet, one played clarinet and he had a buddy

who played clarinet. He said, "You should hear 'em, Mingus. They haven't had any lessons yet but they blowin' something and it sounds like avant-garde. Sounds like Ornette Coleman." I said, "I have to hear that, man." So we go upstairs. The kids come out with their horns, they're laughing and happy. So I told them to play something and afterwards I said, "That's right, man. That's what they're doing. It's just guesswork." So the next day I called Max Gordon [Village Vanguard owner] and told him to advertise the appearance of the "Masked Marvels," some musicians I had discovered who could cut anybody living, as far as avant-garde was concerned.

We put the three kids behind the curtain. Roy Brooks was on drums, I was on piano and the kids' father was on bass. My two horns were playing, too—just to make it make sense. Then we laid out and it was just Roy and the kids behind the curtain. You should have heard it, man. Roy was reciting a poem: "What are you gonna do with them niggers down here? What are you gonna do with them niggers down south, now that Martin Luther King has got them to open their mouth? What are you goin' to do when they grow up and knock you in your head?" It's a funny poem he says and these kids were playing right with him, as crazy as he was. So the audience applauded and I said, "You like the Masked Marvels?" They gave a standing ovation. "Bravo, bravo." "Now I'm going to show them to you and they want to talk to you. They want to tell you something."

And the spokesman for the kids, his name is "Popcorn," he's a little braver than the rest. He said, "Ladies and gentlemen, please don't tell me I can play my horn and sound good as my father and these other people that work with Mingus, because we haven't had one lesson yet and if you applaud for us that means that you don't even know what you're listening to. So don't tell us we can play. Take it back, 'cause we can't play." All the kids start sayin', "Please don't tell us we're musicians. Take it back. We want to learn. We want to learn the scales, the chords and grow up to be good musicians."

And that's the way it was left. We had no encore. The people were quiet; they were hurt. It was a shock to them to be put in their place that way. Yeah, that was something. The "Masked Marvels." All you had to do was put a title on them.



"IF YOU LEARN A PIECE OF music to play by heart, and you're a composer, you're going to ruin your creative sense. Pure composition is taking one note with no thought and using it to go where you want to, until you hear the next note."



### ON THE WORKSHOP

*You have a reputation as being able to get a musician to play not only the notes of your composition, but within the spirit.*

People say that. Eric Dolphy and Ted Curson did it on the compositions, and John Handy, Booker Ervin. [Charles] McPherson and Lonnie Hillyer never did it. They never played my music. They were incapable of doing it my way. They had to do everything—even if it was a waltz—with a bebop feeling to it.

*How would you be able to instill the spirit of a composition in a musician?*

I'd usually play it, or hum it. I lost most of my voice; I used to sing very high, I could sing the whole line. But I'd just get on the piano and sing the parts, do the voicing.

*What about the concept of the Jazz Workshop? That was really*

*pioneering, that people would come down to a club and pay to see musicians playing, rehearsing.*

Because they heard something good before we stopped. The reason I did it was because I couldn't afford to pay for rehearsals. If I paid for rehearsals, I wouldn't make any money. So I had to do it on the bandstand. "Ladies and gentlemen, we have a new composition, and to work out the bad things, we have to play it four or five times." People would stand up and applaud at the final playing. And sometimes we never got the composition together.



## ON BIRD

I played with Bird the week before he died. Bird was coming late [at Birdland] and Oscar Goodstein wouldn't even let him in sometimes. He was drinkin' a whole lot. Bird had me on bass, Art Blakey on drums, Kenny Dorham on trumpet and Bud Powell on piano. Bird wouldn't let Kenny on the bandstand with him; he made him stand on the floor and play. At intermissions Bird and Bud would go sit in a booth. Bird's sitting there with his arm around Bud, Bud looks like a puppet. Monk walks in and sees them and says, "Both those motherfuckers are acting. I told 'em to act crazy, I didn't tell 'em to act crazy all the time. 'Cause if you act crazy, the white people pay more attention to you. I taught Bud how to act crazy a long time ago. But I didn't know he'd keep doin' it and not stop." Oscar comes over and says somethin' to Bird and Bird says, "Well, I guess I've had it." So I said, "You better look at what you're doing. You didn't win the *downbeat* poll this year"—Lee Konitz or Paul Desmond did—"you're not playing for nobody." So he says, "Well, I'm goin' someplace next week where I won't bother nobody." I told him since everyone had copied his style and was making more money off it than he was he should change his style completely and turn it all around again. He said, "I just might do that; I just might do that."

The day Bird died, Bill Coss [of *Metronome*] had asked me and Teddy Charles to review a Duke Ellington concert. Teddy and I were walking on 7th Avenue towards Carnegie, and there was a sudden clap of thunder in a clear blue sky. Teddy got excited, but I felt sort of funny and peaceful inside, like something had happened to a whole lot of people. I didn't think anything about it. I went to the concert and put everybody down in my article: Duke, Jazzbo Collins the disc jockey (I called him Sambo Collins), Gerry Mulligan. I didn't like nobody that night.

So after Bird dies, I was talking to Nica. Bird died in her apartment. She said she heard that clap of thunder too when he died. You can ask her about it. I think I heard it more in my heart than in my ears. And a piece of me died.



## ON LEARNING BEBOP

I talked to Hambone, trombone player, and asked him, "Man, what is all this shit about bebop? What's so difficult about it?" He said, "Well, one time it was 'dixieland,' then 'ragtime,' then 'jazz,' now let it be

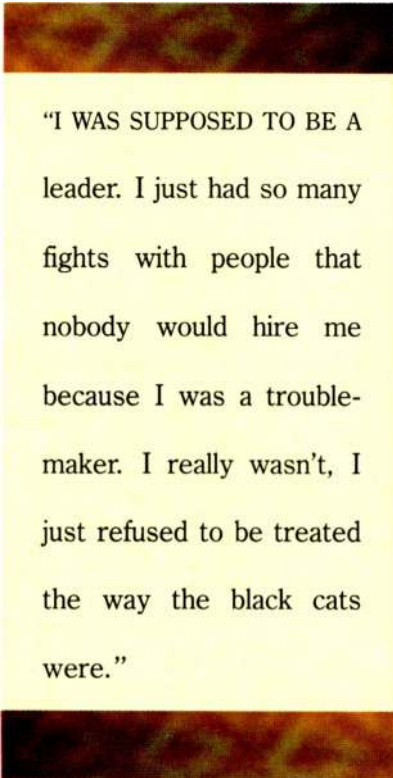
'bop'"—that's where it came from. "The way you know when you're playin' it, one of these days it just comes to you if you try and you know you made it. And you're treated like you belong to all the clan." He didn't use "clan" though that's what he meant. 'Cause I had a spiritual joining with Charlie. I heard Bird say, "Okay, Mingus, you're with us now." I felt something that was very spiritual.

Bird brought in glissandos and everything with his horn. I never heard him that much. I never followed him around or got his records. I just heard him in person. I didn't accept bebop in New York. It was just another simple form of music to me. I thought Buddy Collette played as much or more than Charlie Parker. It didn't impress me until I married Celia. And she said, "You haven't ever really listened to Charlie Parker, Mingus. Buddy Collette doesn't play half the horn he plays. He's creating and Buddy Collette's just playing chord changes and scales. Charlie Parker's making music." I said, "I heard him, baby. It's not that complicated as you say it is."

But I began to wonder. I was teaching guys that worked in a studio band. They'd say, "Man, did you hear this record by Charlie Parker?" I'd say, "Which one?" They'd say, "'Koko.'" I'd say, "No, I haven't. But I've heard him." They're putting on Sonny Criss, Shifty Henry, Teddy Edwards. I said, "Man, Buddy Collette can play like that—play just as fast and faster." They said, "It's not just that he's playing *fast*, man. Listen to what he's playin'." So I called Buddy on the phone. I said, "Buddy, these cats are always talkin' about 'you can't do this.'" So Buddy came over and said, "Put the record on." They put it on and he gets a pencil and started writing the solo out. I said, "See, I told you Buddy knew as much as Bird. He can write it out for you and you guys can play all the solos." I didn't know at that time that the fact that he could write it out wasn't much. They said later that he was playing the notes but he wasn't playing the feeling.

I knew that Bird was into much more complicated studies than most alto saxophone players. I knew what they said was true: Buddy sounded like he was playing it out of an exercise book and he wasn't getting Bird's tone. But I didn't know that till the following two or three Sundays when I played at this jam session with Miles Davis, Lucky Thompson, Dodo Marmarosa, Stan Levy. Miles was in the audience, and Charlie Parker went up to the mike and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have one of the greatest trumpet players out here with us. Will you welcome Miles Davis." And everybody clapped for Miles and he says, "Fuck you, Bird." Right out loud. I never heard anything like that on a bandstand. We never said anything to the audience, or we whispered to each other. Miles says, "Why the fuck you call me up here, Bird? Shit, I don't feel like playing. You play too weird. Okay, what you got, motherfucker?" Motherfucker every other word.

I came to New York, but I didn't catch on to the cursing until after Eric Dolphy, Lonnie Hillyer and Charles McPherson. Yusef Lateef brought them by like little children. He's sayin', "Here, take these kids, they're very good." So Eric says, "Hi, motherfucker, how you doin'? Goddam, you got a badass





band”—right in front of the people, out loud. Dannie said, “What kind of shit is this? These guys cuss in front of the audience.” And before you know it, a while after they came into the band, me and Dannie were doing the same thing, walkin’ around cussin’ in front of the people.



### ON THE WEST COAST SOUND

In California it was different. People I knew, their main thing wasn’t solos, it was the ensemble, and maybe give one guy a solo. In New York if there’s five men, all five men take a solo before you end the piece. We used to write the elaborate arrangements in California—Buddy Collette, Britt Woodman, John Anderson, Oscar Bradley, Spaulding Givens on piano. Spaulding wrote the most difficult compositions and good ones. This band stayed together quite a while; we called it the Stars of Swing, nobody was a leader. When Miles was in it, Lucky Thompson came out and he joined it. Lucky wanted to put his name on it and take over the band. We got a job and he took down our sign and put his name up. The book was written for four horns, so we played with three, without Lucky, and it sounded better even... We’d play a tune and a couple guys would take solos and we’d take it out. It wasn’t all just improvisation. We were mainly concerned with arrangements. We recorded that band and no one ever knew what happened to the tapes. That band today would be avant-garde—it was then. I can say that about Composer’s Workshop, too—Teddy Charles, Teo Macero—that was really enjoyable. It had to be, we were workin’ for free, there wasn’t no money.



### ON MILES

I played with him in California at Billy Berg’s. Miles

in those days was a very sweet guy. He got evil later on. I don’t know why. You could tell that every word he said, like if he was answering somebody, that he was trying to put them down. He used to say very little and was a laughing, playing person. I remember one time he came and jumped on my back when I was standing in front of Birdland, like riding a horse. That’s before I was fat. I reeled around and grabbed his legs and pulled him around my front and he hugged and kissed me. I did the same thing to him about 10 years later at a party at Neshui Ertegun’s house...



### ON GERMAN HOSPITALITY

The way George Wein books us, man—he books you so that when you’re through playing, you go on to the next job on a bus. Sometimes you put your bags in a hotel, thinking you’re going to sleep, and when the job is over the manager tells you, “Go back and get the bags, we’re leaving at 12 o’clock.” There’s no time to even lay down. I had a sit-in strike against George Wein at the airport in Germany. Me, Jaki Byard, I think Dannie. The German promoter came out to the airport and I said, “My drummer hasn’t had any food.” George wouldn’t give him an advance and he didn’t have money to eat. He was sick. He didn’t tell me, Jaki did. I said, “I’m not going on until you bring us some money.” He convinced us there’d be some money after the concert. When I got there and saw there wasn’t, at the end of the first set I announced to the people that we were playing against our will, that we hadn’t got paid yet. As soon as I said that, a line of police walked up on the stage and they told the people to clear the hall.

There’s another incident that happened in Berlin. The band checked into a hotel and Jaki Byard called me and said, “Man, my room’s a mess like a pig’s been in here.” I said, “Mine’s the same way. It’s ridiculous. Let’s go downstairs and complain.” So we go downstairs and they stand at attention, man, and say, “That’s your room. No one’s coming in. You fix it.” Then George Wein gets off the elevator and says, “What’s goin’ on? My room’s not even made up yet.” So I found the bus and slept on the bus. They all saluted George Wein, but someone put a swastika on Eric Dolphy’s door. Eric said he’d never go back, it was too racist. It was like they wanted to “get us.”



**A man of ravenous passions and highly developed self-worth.**



### ON DOLPHY

Eric Dolphy is the only alto player I know that, since Bird

has been dead, has got a tone as big and as loud as Bird. Kids today stand with their horns right up to the mike, the bell of the horn. Bird stood back at least four or five feet from the mike and you could hear him all over the room. Same with Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster. Lester Young had a very small sound, pretty, a soft, quiet sound. He got right up to the mike. If I remember, Benny Carter had a big sound because in the old days they didn’t have no microphones. And you played a big dance with people talking and makin’ noise and all, you had to be heard. I’ve had guys copying Eric or trying to do things me

# THE RESURRECTION OF MINGUS' JAZZ SYMPHONY

BY TOM MOON

**I**t says a lot about Charles Mingus, poet and composer, bandleader and innovator in the field of improvised music, that he wrote his own *Epitaph*—a huge, sprawling, two-hours-plus work that is finally being exhumed a full decade following his death. For years no one even knew Mingus had composed such a work, though close associates might have expected it; Charles was a man of ravenous passions and highly developed self-worth. He didn't chase trends, but stuck to his all-consuming struggles, like the integration of jazz spontaneity into larger, more complex forms. He wasn't a jazz character in the Louis Armstrong mold, but he *had* character, and it reared its head among loved ones and archenemies with equal fervor. He had to fight with you before he could be comfortable with you. He could love many women, but seemed able to pursue music with just one drummer, the late Dannie Richmond. He could conjure the most righteous, high-minded gospel settings and at the same time sing through his instrument about the most basic of urges.

Long before he became crippled with the amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease) that led to his death at age 57 in 1979, Mingus knew that his particular set of personality traits were the rare confluence of severity and sensitivity. Nobody else had that same uncompromising streak, the courage of convictions that said it's okay to improvise as a collective, not okay to do it without an overriding structure. He knew he had made a contribution—those associated with him were fond of calling Mingus a "university, on and off the stand." He knew that though the jazz establishment generally overlooked him, the works he produced and the innovations he introduced—modal harmony, extended form, gospel, the incorporation of time-signature and tempo changes, the interactive rhythm approach he called "rotary perception"—would survive.

As much as he wanted the world to hear everything—a major Mingus drive that led to Debut, one of the first artist-run record labels—Mingus kept his *Epitaph*, a two-hours-plus work written for 33 musicians, a secret. There were hints: At Town Hall in October 1962, some 30 musicians gathered to play segments of what scholars Gunther Schuller and Andrew Homzy now identify as segments of this enormous work. Those scholars have pieced the music together and edited it, and with the help of a number of musicians (some associated with Mingus over the years) it will premiere in early June, in New York and Washington. If the primary dialogue on Mingus has been about the anger and anguish of his later years, then the performance of *Epitaph*, coming at the 10-year anniversary of his death, should at least bring the discussion back to music.

Which is where it belongs. Mingus is relevant still: Joni Mitchell discovered this doing her collaborative homage *Mingus* in 1979, and David Murray and the practitioners of the avant-gutbucket style have borrowed his basic precepts as

the foundation for their less-than-avant experiments. The next Hal Willner tribute album focuses on Mingus, with Elvis Costello singing "Weird Nightmare." *Epitaph* is another telling reminder that Mingus' contributions cannot be lightly dismissed. Schuller, a composer and author who had worked with Mingus in the '50s, admits to being "overwhelmed" when he saw the *Epitaph* score: "I'm sure his hope was to find improvisation and spontaneity and freedom, and at the same time compose a large, extensive frame of reference," he observes. "That's the problem which in jazz has not yet been solved. Only Duke Ellington really tackled it. But Ellington was still writing songs and fashioning suites around them. This has nothing to do with 32-bar songs. It's composition in the truest sense."

Schuller doesn't assert that *Epitaph* will bridge the age-old spontaneity/improvisation gap: They can only execute what's on the page, a task made doubly difficult because Mingus "didn't have the most legible way of copying the score." In addition, notes in the margins indicate the bassist was hearing specific players for certain solos, i.e., that much of the piece depended on Eric Dolphy. "So much was written around him," Schuller says. "There's no way to replace him, literally or figuratively. I think Mingus conceived this as a tribute to all these great musicians—they were going to create as much of the piece as he was."

The musicians chosen to help resurrect this *Epitaph* do include a mix of old Mingus hands and young lions: There's a 10-piece reed section (altos: John Handy, Jerome Richardson and Bobby Watson; tenors: George Adams, Phil Bodner, John Purcell; baritones: Nick Brignola and Ronnie Cuber; bassoon: Michael Rabinowitz; contra bass clarinet: Roger Rosenberg), 13 brass (trombones: Eddie Bert, Sam Burtis, Paul Faulise, Jimmy Knepper, Dave Tayler, Britt Woodman; trumpets: Randy

Brecker, Wynton Marsalis, Lew Soloff, Jack Walrath, Joe Wilder, Snooky Young; tuba: Don Butterfield) and a rhythm section that includes two pianists (Sir Roland Hanna and John Hicks), two bassists (Reggie Johnson, Edwin Schuller) and one drummer (Victor Lewis). Schuller and the musicians will give the piece "a credible representative performance," he says, which is more than can be said for the only other concert featuring sections of *Epitaph*, back in 1962.

At that time, Mingus had convinced his label, United Artists, to go along with a plan to document a live recording session. But the record company moved the date up five weeks, chopping seriously into preparation time. Mingus, who had not written anything for big band since 1954, began to farm out some of the orchestration work—surrogate orchestrators included Melba Liston, Bob Hammer, Gene Rowland and Pepper Adams. In one famous argument, the bassist knocked out one of trombonist Jimmy Knepper's teeth because he



CONTINUED ON PAGE 68



and Eric did—definitely words, a conversation with each other—and they put in their souls and it sounds wrong. It doesn't fit the copy.

I knew Eric when he was a kid. Lloyd Reese was having his rehearsal band on Sundays, and he used to come and sit on the steps and listen. He was a very sweet person. I knew he wasn't no Charlie Parker. He wasn't playing no simple lines like Bird. Incidentally, his horn played out of tune in the high register. I asked him why he didn't get a new horn and he said he liked the fact that it played quarter tones. He handed it to Buddy Collette to play and Buddy said, "It's out of tune, Eric. How can you play it?" Eric said, "I *make* it play in tune, but when I want to, then I can play quarter tones on it 'cause it's out of tune." Quarter tones are those between the black and white keys—like the East Indians, the Arabs. They've used them for centuries.

*On that cut "What Love" where you and he are having an argument, what's that about?*

It was before we were going to Europe again, and he didn't tell me he wasn't going to go. We went into the recording studio to do the date before we left, and he told me the night before we were going to close that he wasn't going to make it. And that was really the best band I ever had. We worked together for a long time. So that kept that band from going. Then I still got him to go a few years later with Charlie Coles and Jaki Byard, Clifford Jordan.

*Clifford Jordan played real soft. Eric played real loud.*

Loud as Charlie Parker. He's the only one of that school. Sometimes I had to put him behind a curtain so you could hear the other horns. Put Johnny back there too—the trumpet player. You couldn't hear Johnny on the record, but you could hear Eric.

*Were you in Europe when Eric gave you that hat?*

In Germany. He was going on to Paris. When he was leaving me he said, "Man, I want to shake your hand and tell you that I never had such a lesson in music in my life and what a pleasure it's been working with you and that's it, except I want to give you this hat, 'cause you spoke about you liked it so much, and say goodbye to you because I'm never coming back to Germany." I said, "Me, either." When I heard he went I was amazed and when he died in Germany, I thought it was some kind of racket. I thought somebody made him go. We couldn't even drink water there. Water tasted like blood.

*What did he die of? Do you know?*

I don't know. I was walking the floor once, couldn't sleep, almost bumped into Eric. He said, "I can't sleep, can't drink, can't do nothin' here." Somebody said he had sugar diabetes. I know he told me something was wrong; I sent him to my doctor in New York for an examination and they couldn't find anything wrong except he had this lump on his head and they took it out. You ever notice that lump like a big "A" on his forehead?

*So no one really knows what he died of?*

His cousin is the one that called me. It really shocked me. Because he said he'd never go back to Germany. He was a quiet person. I loved him very much.



## ON COMPOSITION

If you learn a piece of music to play by heart, and you're a composer, you're going to ruin your creative sense because you're going to go by these guidelines without realizing. Pure composition is taking one note with no thought and using it where you want to, go wherever you want to, until you hear that next note.

That's the way I wrote *Portrait*. I did more of that on "Revelations"... I went through a period of havin' to get rid of Art Tatum, get him out of my mind, 'cause he had all these set chord changes he used on these tunes and I couldn't write no music. Debussy is definitely right. All the musicians I know today, memorizing and copying other people's music, should read this book by Debussy, it would turn their minds around. *The Mad Hatter*.

I first heard the impressionists when I started studying with Lloyd Reese. Ben Webster studied with him, so did Harry Carney, Buddy Collette. Lloyd taught composition the same way I teach it! You write a melody without any chords, write it in several keys and then try different chords with the same melody. So it's like a study. That really trains your mind to be alert for composition.

"I THINK SOME MUSIC IS  
the description of the  
sicknesses of a society.

That music in restaurants  
and elevators is destruc-

tive. If they had good  
music playing for people, it

would be a happy society  
on the streets."



## ON FIGURED BASS LINES

You can take one chord pattern or one pedal point and make many melodies go up against it. It comes out of classical music, really. The mistake is that these guys [other jazz players using it] should have

been doin' it on only one or two tunes. They did it on every tune and made the whole jazz world start playing one chord. Even the 6/8 thing—I started that.

The form of jazz was a straight 4/4 beat with a 12-bar phrase as a blues or else a 32-bar phrase that was a song everybody knew, AABA: eight bars, eight bars repeat, a bridge of eight bars and then the first eight again. I got rid of that and put a free form. Spanish people do it, Armenians do it. You set a rhythmic pattern, keep that going and set a melodic line against it.

In my particular case, the conductor is the piano or the drums. He watches me until we reach the climax I'm looking for through the tacit or extended form. I cue Dannie [Richmond], then Dannie gives a cue that everybody else recognizes, which is sometimes a four-bar phrase, or sometimes is an eight-bar phrase. The reason I use drums is that they're loud enough so that no one misses it. In "Sue's Changes" I use that at the very end of the piece and also at the beginning of the piece, but we didn't increase the tempo. I like accelerandos, too, where you speed the tempo up. I like all the classical forms. I learned to enjoy them in my playing—speeding up, slowing down, going to another tempo, rubato. That's what makes music great to me, and enjoyable.

I didn't "discover" anything, it's been there all the time. When I was 16 or 17 I was playing for shows in California—me and Buddy Collette—and a dancer comes with a piece of music and he has these extended sections, or "vamps." They have these spots in the piece so that in case the show is only 40

CONTINUED ON PAGE 70

wouldn't agree to write some horn backgrounds in addition to copying the parts.

As Mingus' widow Susan Graham Mingus has said, Mingus was "accustomed to things not going right." Even with that outlook, the initial performance of *Epitaph* was a bleak affair. Calling the scene at Town Hall that night "chaotic" might not do it justice. Mingus had copyists onstage during the performance, racing through parts to one segment while another was being performed. The recording engineers, who had not met with Mingus prior to the event, failed to supply monitor speakers so that the band—an all-star cast of some 30 Mingus associates—could hear itself.

Over 100 audience members demanded (and received) refunds. United Artists claimed it lost \$23,000; Mingus, waiting for payment of the advance six months later, said he lost \$18,000. He was also charged with three counts of assault for the incident with Knepper.

Artistically, it wasn't happening, either: "It wasn't clear to any of us in the audience that this *Epitaph* was supposed to be part of a larger piece," Schuller recalls, noting that the Town Hall concert presented excerpts of the whole, in scattershot fashion. "The Town Hall concert was supposed to bring this piece to light, but it obviously never came together."

The full score (15 lbs., 3446 measures) shows what an ambitious notion it was to bring all of Mingus' disparate elements together in the first place—they don't wrap into a neat package, and there aren't always specific instructions about how to do it. Mingus was clearly big on bandstand intuition. Knepper describes the score as "a complete mess... just hard to decipher," and though he's been involved with previous Mingus Dynasty projects, the trombonist is vacillating on whether he will join the performance of *Epitaph*.

Thus the job of making the work playable falls mainly to Schuller, who has devoted huge chunks of time to it this spring. Most has been spent adding dynamic markers, trimming some sections while refocusing others, and correcting errors. "There are some strange things that don't work. For instance, the tympani is written two octaves below its range. We've had to correct things like that."

Andrew Homzy says he gained a new respect for the bassist during the cataloging process, which turned into a detective hunt for score pages with similar instrumentation. At first Homzy disregarded the oversized score paper as discontinuous doodlings. Then he noticed that the pages, many old and yellowed, displayed consecutive measure numbers. He patched the pieces together, and tracked their origin to the Town Hall session. "Mingus had a big sense of self. He didn't throw anything he'd written away. He valued all those scores. They were a chronicle of his goals and ambitions. Even the stuff in the beginning, which was very obviously student work. It's fascinating to see how he progressed and arrived at his language."

Like Duke Ellington, one of the few men Mingus idolized, Mingus wrote carefully for individuals—relying, for *Epitaph*, on the voices of Dolphy, Richmond, Snooky Young. He expected his soloists to carry the spirit of his melodies into their improvisations, and demanded no-bullshit soul-baring—all strictly reverent to the rhythmic pocket, and of volcanic intensity. You joined Mingus' band, you came to work.

To help reinforce that, Mingus—who preferred to teach players his music by singing it, or playing it dictation-style on the piano—wrote personal memos in the *Epitaph* score. When he wanted Snooky Young to use a plunger mute, Mingus wrote: "It's toilet time." To Dolphy on the temperament of a

solo: "Talk out of my bag for a while then go 'head on Eric, or I wouldn't ask you."

Mingus found ways to bring out the innermost qualities of musicians—as one associate said, "He knew exactly what to do to get anyone around him to do anything"—and on *Epitaph* he was looking to challenge Dolphy with extended solos on saxophone and flute. It wasn't to be: Due to a schedule conflict, Dolphy wasn't on the Town Hall date, and died in Europe following Mingus' tour there in 1964.

**E**pitaph's 17 sections, which last from one to nine minutes, are not linked thematically; Mingus intended to connect them with sections of improvisation. Some of the pieces were recastings of earlier themes—the already-recorded "Pithecanthropus Erectus" appears in the main score section, there's a reworking of the Vernon Duke standard "I Can't Get Started," an appreciation "O.P." for bassist Oscar Pettiford that surfaced later as "O.P.O.P." and "Peggy's Blue Skylight." The bulk of the work is fresh Mingus composition, spanning the styles he was interested in throughout the '50s, his most productive period—gospel, the blues, extended-form writing, pedal-point modal explorations, music with narration. Apart from a brief quote from Ellington's "Black Brown and Beige," the only non-Mingus original is an arrangement of Jelly Roll Morton's "Wolverine Blues." Those who have seen the score view this as part of Mingus' master plan. "When people talk about dying, they tell about seeing their life pass in front of their eyes," says Homzy. "Mingus had a fascination with death, and the piece can be likened to that. It's a flashback of his goals and expressions as a composer, examples of where he had come from—which explains the Ellington references and 'Wolverine Blues.'"

For Mingus, struggle was a fact of life. "Whenever I would complain about some little thing that wasn't working out," Susan Mingus recalls, "Charles would point out that he had this massive work that had never been performed. That's all he ever said about *Epitaph*." But he complained more than once about not having an Ellington-like orchestra to sharpen his writing skills on. (Ellington, sensing that Mingus counted himself among the "Ellington school" of composers, once responded, "That's what *he* says.") George Adams, who was part of the Jazz Workshop in the mid-'60s, believes this is true: "I think he had a big band in the back of his head." Adds Homzy: "He never had the opportunity to hear instantly what he had written for large ensemble. He would have benefited from the editing, dynamics, phrasing. He had a passionate desire to hear his work, and I think he never had the opportunity to do that."

The aborted version of *Epitaph* seemed to reawaken Mingus' writerly muse: His next endeavor was "The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady," considered one of his hallmark achievements. The 10-piece band executes intricate counterpoint in which melodic and rhythmic functions frequently overlap, and Mingus' themes pulse with a determination that is fierce even by Mingus' determined standards.

Schuller is convinced that Mingus' composition from that period represents a telling moment in jazz history, when, even more than Ellington, Mingus was wrestling with the problem of channeling spontaneity into more organized, orchestral surroundings. "Whether he would have succeeded [with *Epitaph*] or not, we'll never know. But it's clear he was taking the lessons he learned from his work with larger forces and bringing them together with the things he learned in the small group. This was jazz music of wide-ranging stylistic interests, and to put that together was Mingus' challenge—he tried it again on *Let My Children Hear Music* in the early '70s. But *Epitaph*, there's nothing like it in the whole history of jazz." ❏



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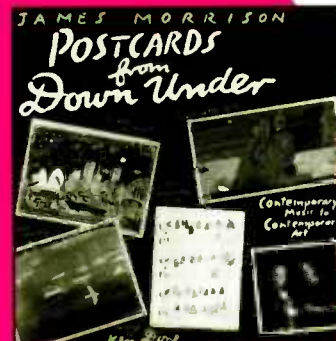
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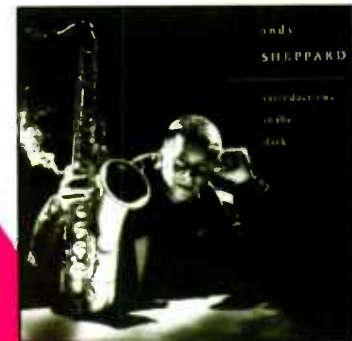
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minutes instead of 50 or an hour, they can say, "When you come to Section A, you'll find a tacit. Tacit until cue from conductor and go out," which means he's watching the clock and will segue to the ending. I used to play with so many guys in jazz, I just got tired of them doin' nothing, just playing one tempo all night long, so that was the reason for using other forms of expression.

*In your music it seems that the extended form sort of made its appearance in the '50s when—*

When I did "Blue Cee." I did it for Atlantic Records. I'd been playin' it for years before that, though. I remember playin' it at the Half Note when nobody else was playing it. They all laughed, all the musicians. They used to come down for a laugh... Miles Davis came down and laughed at me and said, "What kind of band is that, playing one chord for a whole hour?" Now that's all he's doing.

Teddy Charles wasn't using extended form, but he was still writing some good music. So was John La Porta, Teo, Shorty Rogers. But they still would not change the tempo. I really can't enjoy music if I have to play "boom, boom, boom, boom, boom" all night.



### ON MILES STEALING

When Miles said that about playing one chord for a whole hour, I said, "Well, that's the way my music goes. Why do you guys play a different chord on every beat? That's just as stupid. I happen to like to hear a form build from the bottom and have a melody come in, then another melody come in." Next thing I know Miles has hired my piano player, Wynton Kelly. I go see Miles and he's doin' [sings "Haitian Fight Song"]—not that same one but

something similar. I said to Wynton, "Why you teach that motherfucker that?" He says, "He asked me what you were doing and he liked it. He wanted me to show it to him." What finished it off was, I'd done a date with Bill Evans and showed him the same thing and he went in Miles Davis' band and he really cleared it up for Miles. And Miles got a hit record. My first one was on Atlantic about 10 years before Miles heard it but they didn't have that good distribution, so Miles got one out of mine—"Pithecanthropus Erectus," where I got "Blue Cee" and "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting." In other words, I had two songs with pedal points and Miles' piece was very much like mine. [L'Académie] Charles Cros in France noticed it and sent me an award even though it was written six years before, and sent Miles Davis an award. A plaque to me and one to Miles. Those guys are listening over there. They know when somebody's stealing from somebody.



### ON HIS RESEMBLANCE TO ELLINGTON

I never sat down, took a piece of Duke's and said, "What is he doing, let me see if I can do that!" If I have any resemblance to Duke Ellington, which I don't think I do, it was because I loved him so much and subconsciously I heard something, absorbed it and later it came out in my work. He was an unbelievable man. Duke played a concert in Berkeley where he was supposed to conduct a piece of mine. I chose "The Clown," but, with the exception of Harry Carney and Proco [Russell Procope], the band couldn't play it. They played it all wrong. Each part had a 3/4 bar with quarter-note triplets and two eighth-notes, and they couldn't get it together. But Duke still played it, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 121

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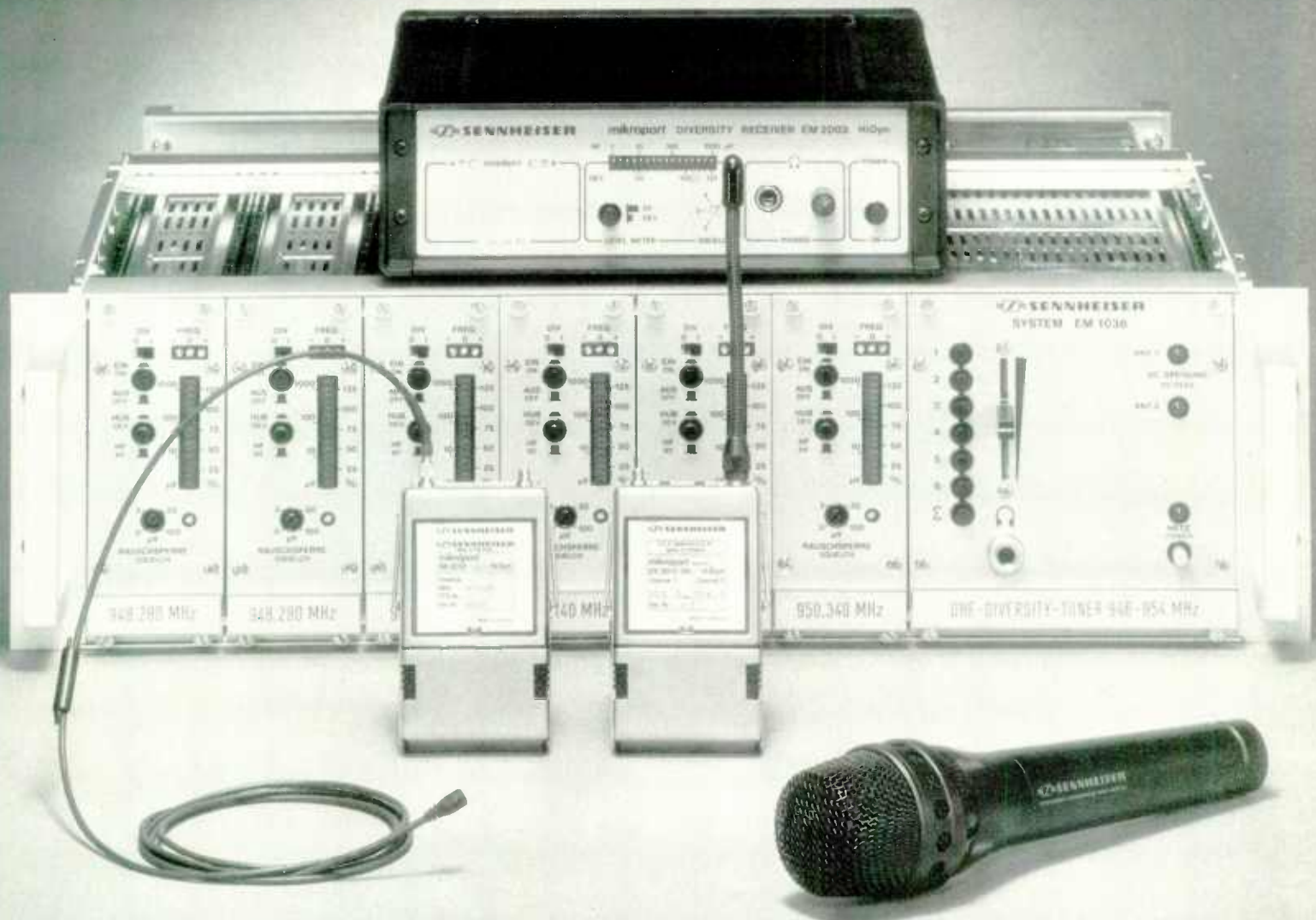


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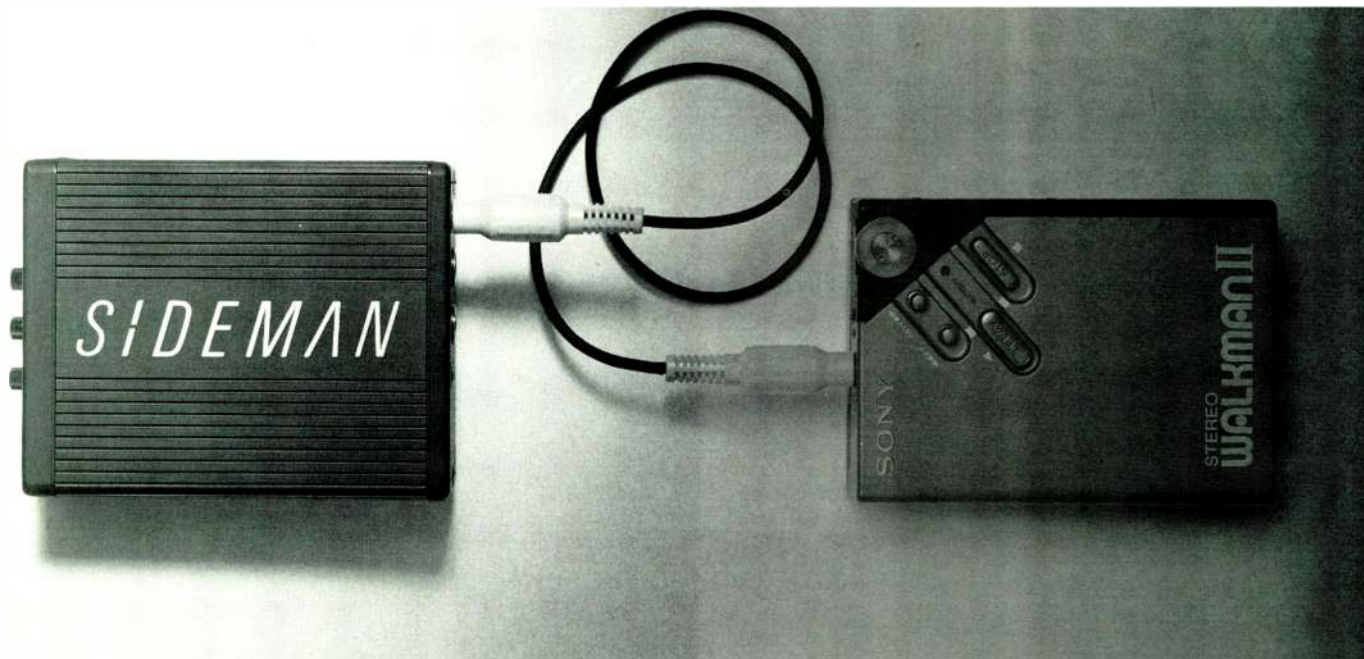
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JIM KELTNER

Once a *Playboy*, now the sixth Wilbury, he's traded fours with the finest. How Snakey Jim's "seductive thing" made him a studio superstar.

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PHEEROAN akLAFF

The prince of new jazz percussion aims for a higher kingdom.

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How the Big Daddy of the snare drums gets hot whacks on tracks.

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TIME

Some have it, others don't. Rising stick star Michael Blair explains why.

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PICCOLO SNARES

Smaller snare shells are acoustic drumming's next big thing.



# Jim Keltner's Beatnik Beat

He's played with the Traveling Wilburys,  
Mad Dogs & Englishmen, the concert for Bangladesh  
and Fred MacMurray on "My Three Sons."  
He's the coolest skin-man of all.

By Tony Scherman



SITTING AT HOME in Los Angeles in his favorite chair ("the older you get, the more you stick with one chair"), Jim Keltner produces an ancient, imitation-leather ledger, its cardboard edges crumbling, its pages brown and brittle: the carefully kept record of his first 10 years of work. Page one, line one, reads: "Frat Party, L.A. State College w/Mike Conlon,

10/1/60. Paid: \$15." A few pages on, at random: "Little League Ballpark Opening, Van Nuys, w/Steve Johnson, 4/15/62, paid \$20... Battle of Bands (2nd Place), w/Hal Willis, 6/22/62." For second place, the pay was zero dollars.

Slowly, magically, the names swim into focus: "... Las Vegas, Tropicana, Perez Prado, 11/19 to 12/16/64, paid \$720... Start on salary w/Gary Lewis, \$200/wk, first gig, Minneapolis, 8/21/65... GL session, 'Just My Style,' Leon R. producing, 10/6/65, paid \$177.95... 1/15 to 1/19/69, Ledbetter's, Westwood, Bonnie and Delaney, paid 5 nites: \$60... 3/17/70, A&M Studios, Hollywood, Joe Cocker & Leon R., 'The Letter'... 3/20/70, Joe Cocker tour begins, Detroit, salary \$250/wk... 3/27/70, Joe Cocker, Fillmore East, live recording... 5/15/71, Western One, Hollywood, Ry Cooder session... 5/24/71, Ascot Sound, John Lennon & Phil Spector, 'Jealous Guy,' 'Don't Wanna Be a Soldier' session... Sunday, August 1, 1971, George Harrison, Madison Square Garden, Bangladesh concert, benefit...."

Keltner shuts the gig book. Pushing back his black shades, he half-laughs. "Damn, I'd forgotten—that's what Delaney and Bonnie paid me? Twelve bucks a *night*? You won't find too many guys today who'll do that. But I didn't give a damn, I just wanted to play." If he sounds like a grizzled pensioner, a rock retiree mulling his role in times long past, the impression couldn't be falser. Thirty years after scribbling those first gig-

book entries, Jim Keltner, the wiliest, subtlest drummer in rock 'n' roll, is busier than ever. In the last 24 months, his skills at their peak, Keltner kick-started all or parts of *Traveling Wilburys, Volume 1*, Roy Orbison's *Mystery Girl*, Elvis Costello's *Spike*, *Get Rhythm* by Ry Cooder, George Harrison's *Cloud Nine*, John Hiatt's *Bring the Family*, Pink Floyd's *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, The Beach Boys' "Kokomo," Richard Thompson's *Daring Adventures* and *Amnesia*, Pat McLaughlin's under-recognized debut, Tom Petty's *Full Moon Fever*, new albums by Maria McKee and Dave Edmunds... an amazing list that lengthens, literally, every day.

Keltner plays his drums with a sly, unhurried mastery, like a basketball player dribbling lazily behind his back. Pulled in by the groove, the simple surface, you hardly notice the complex push-and-pull below. It's drumming in the great, subterranean tradition of rock 'n' roll sidemen, of Motown's Benny Benjamin and Earl Palmer of New Orleans and Muscle Shoals' Roger Hawkins and Al Jackson of Stax: drummers who, in bringing out the best in the artists they accompanied, managed to forge their own personal voices.

"It's a very seductive thing Keltner's got," says guitarist Ry Cooder. "He lets you be who you are, and still be with him; when I go for something I know he'll be right there. I'm not even sure what it is, but I can tell you this: I can't play right if Keltner's not playing."

"Why's Keltner great?" asks producer/keyboardist Jim Dickinson. "This sounds like a terrible thing to say, but Keltner's like the goodhearted whore: He's unique in the place he can put *you* when you play with him. Keltner's a walking embodiment of rock feeling; Jim Keltner's cool. Even in an era when cool isn't hip anymore, he still is. He plays cool, he walks cool, he sits down cool. He's just one of those guys, and there's only a few."

Keltner says he looks like "an old fat accountant"; padding





PHOTO BY EBET ROBERTS

around his house in his shades and scrubbly dark beard, he looks more like a domesticated biker. Session stars can be pushy egomaniacs; Keltner is shy, nervous, self-effacing. Born in 1942 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, he was christened “Jimmie Lee” by his housepainter daddy and Mexican mother (“my mom’s got this Spanish-Okie accent that’s hilarious”). His father played drums with the Shriners; on his mom’s side, Uncle Willie “Smokey” Mendoza played bass with Bob and Johnnie Lee Wills.

In 1955 the family moved to Pasadena. Jimmie Lee went to all-white Pasadena High School but ran with the crosstown brothers from Muir High. At 15 he was playing drums “with West Coast jazz chops, like Shelley Manne.” He gigged often and un lucratively; the gig book tells the story: bowling alleys and Marine base socials, 23 bucks for drumming behind Fred MacMurray’s alto sax in a “My Three Sons” episode, quasi-

paydirt with shlocko bandleader Perez Prado, “King of the Mambo,” and then... a ticket to the top with adenoidal Gary Lewis and his Playboys.

Jimmie Lee made payments on a Daytona-blue ’65 Sting Ray, California license “ooooee” (still his license today); he shaved his moustache, “got me this little rock ’n’ roll look, with bangs.” The Playboys signed autographs in shopping centers and played “Hullabaloo” and “Lloyd Thaxton” and “Mike Douglas.” “Just My Style” hit number three. “First record I ever cut, bang, it’s Top 10 and I’m hearin’ it everywhere I go and I’m diggin’ it, and the whole thing just got into my system. I was hooked.”

“Just My Style”’s arranger (and co-author, co-producer and guitar soloist) was 25-year-old silver-haired Leon Russell, who saw through Keltner’s jazz chops to a rock ’n’ roll heart. Taking Jim aside, Russell said, “You could be a great rock drummer.





**Jimmie Lee blasts off, mid-'50s: "He plays cool, he walks cool, he sits down cool."**

Make a lot of money." The bastard lure of Demon Rock was swaying one more young jazz purist. Fellow Playboys Tom Tripplehorn and Carl Radle schooled Keltner in funk:

"They tried to explain how rock 'n' roll drums should be played. My snare drum was too tight, I played too light, like a little mouse running all over the drums. They said, 'Listen to Chuck Blackwell, listen to Al Jackson and Roger Hawkins. Get more on the backbeat, lean down, don't be so busy, sit back, listen to this, listen to that.' Finally I'm thinking, 'Shit, this ain't easy, this is difficult!' I'd thought any idiot could be a rock drummer, that all you needed was a hammer and a two-by-four. Of course, I was totally wrong."

Fired from the Playboys ("I was upstaging Gary, getting all the laughs at press conferences"), Keltner ran back into jazz. Catching on with pre-fusion guitar star Gabor Szabo ("Gabor thought of me as a rock drummer who could play a little jazz"),

he cut three LPs with Szabo, gigged with Red Norvo, Bobby Hutcherson and ex-Mingus altoist John Handy, recorded with Cal Tjader and Gary McFarland, exchanged sandals with Jack DeJohnette in San Francisco.

In 1969, Carl Radle recommended Keltner to Delaney Bramlett. By the time Delaney & Bonnie & Friends played Hollywood's Whiskey A Go Go, "we'd started to make a little noise. Jimmy Gordon, Jim Horn and some of the other real heavy studio guys came down to the Whiskey; I remember Jimmy Gordon pleading that he'd give me some of his sessions if I'd let him sit in with the band."

Jim Gordon was one of Keltner's idols; they'd already begun the complicated friendship that lasted until Gordon's terrifying skid into madness and murder. Jim Gordon killed his mother in 1983, drew 16 years to life and is confined to Atascadero State Hospital, 200 miles north of L.A. In 1969 he looked "like a





Greek god” to Keltner.

“Jimmy Gordon was a much better drummer than I was.” (“Naw,” says Jim Dickinson, “Gordon was good, but he was completely white, the best surf drummer ever. Gordon was Hal Blaine, Keltner is Earl Palmer.”) “Gordon,” says Keltner, “was an impeccable dresser, a handsome man with everything going for him. But his eyes always reminded me of a cat’s eyes. This is on reflection, after that horrifying moment when they told me what he’d done.

“But oh, I loved his playing! He had this gorgeous white funk. He played a beautiful set of Camco drums that sounded so warm. Listen to *Layla*, listen to ‘Marrakesh Express’—they sound even better today. I was fascinated by Jimmy Gordon, I loved him, I emulated his playing to the point where I finally had to get away from it.”

Keltner got himself fired from Delaney & Bonnie (“I can’t blame Delaney; I walked out on a session to play a record date with Lena Horne and Gabor”) and Jim Gordon replaced him—“which of course made me even more paranoid and insecure.” Keltner stopped moping when he was invited onto Joe Cocker’s “Mad Dogs & Englishmen” tour—and Gordon was hired, too. Whether or not Keltner resented Gordon’s presence (he says he didn’t), “I ended up using Jimmy, taking advantage of his timekeeping strength to play all my fancy little ‘float like a butterfly, sting like a bee’ fills, like on ‘A Little Help from My Friends.’ I felt bad, I felt weird, but if it bothered Jimmy, he didn’t say anything.”

Soon it was Keltner’s turn, again, to be jealous. After the Mad Dogs tour, that insane bacchanal, “I was asked to be in Derek and the Dominos, and that was my second blow dealt by Jimmy Gordon. I was in total awe of Eric, as was everyone in those days. God, he was so dashing! He embodied rock ‘n’ roll guitar; you’d get chills watching him onstage. He was going to do a band, and I was supposed to go to England and do it with him. This is all sort of run together in my mind, but basically, Jimmy got to England first and jammed with Eric and Carl Radle and Bobby Whitlock and it was great, obviously, and that was that. I never heard from Eric again. I went through a period of ‘Hey, enough of this shit, Gordon’s stepped in on *another* gig.’ But I don’t think Jimmy tried to ace me out. I think he always felt guilty about it; I have a feeling he probably still does. Who I was more upset with, at the time, was Eric.” (Slowhand finally did call back—check the credits on his upcoming album.)

Domino or not, by 1971 Keltner was in nonstop demand, for keeps: playing on five John Lennon albums (*Imagine to Rock’n Roll*), five by George Harrison (*Living in the Material World to Cloud Nine*) and every Ry Cooder record but three. Anchoring Bob Dylan’s Christian tours of 1979-81 (“that was when I first learned to play *hard*”). Cutting three albums by Dylan and two by Randy Newman, playing on more than 300 albums in all, plus innumerable singles, from Dylan’s “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door” to Dolly Parton’s “Two Doors Down,” from “Watching the River Flow” to “Kokomo.” Co-composing the soundtrack with Cooder for the forthcoming film *Johnny Handsome*, and banging around with old pals Harrison and Dylan in the Wilburys. “Actually, I’ve just been designated a Wilbury. We went through some possibilities: Sidebury, Couldbury, Wouldbury, Wannabury, then George decided I was a May-Very-Well-bury, and as we speak, well, I guess I’m a bona fide Wilbury.”

At 47, Keltner says he’s hitting his stride only now. “I’ve spent the last 15 years trying to undo my technique. Which probably makes some drummers laugh—‘Ha, what technique did he ever have?’—but what I mean is this: All my favorite listening records are ones that don’t have fabulous drumming technique, they only have fabulous feel. Great ways of *stroking* the drums, the way the old masters did it. Guys like James Black and John Boudreaux from New Orleans. Man, the way they made the drum sound, just by dropping the stick on the head—that has nothing to do with technique.

“It’s backwards to think of chops. I used to constantly worry I’d lose my chops, but not anymore. I just took my son, who’s a 17-year-old drummer, to see Dave Weckl at a drum clinic and I was never so floored in my life. The guy actually has more chops, more control, than anyone I’ve ever seen; at this point I’d have to say he’s unsurpassed. And I’m so *glad* that at this point in my life I could listen to him and not want to throw myself in front of a truck.

“I don’t have the chops of a Dave Weckl. I can get around, I can fool you, but I don’t need chops like that; I’m never in that type of setting. I’m more in the kind of setting where Dave Tough was—where the drums are there to support, period. I know I do that well, and that’s what’s made the difference for me; it’s why I can live in a world of Vinnie Colaiutas and Manu Katchés.

“Some drummers, you can actually hear them thinking about the drums while they play. To me, that’s a no-no. What you want to be doing is responding to the song, playing the song, opening yourself to it with all your emotions.” Producer Mitchell Froom, who hires Keltner again and again: “That’s what Jim does: He plays the song. You really sense how deeply Keltner feels music when you isolate his drums on a slow, soulful song and he’s actually played a *sad* drum track. No other drummer I know can do that.”

The players Keltner calls his masters aren’t headliners, but canny craftsmen. Session men. Hal Blaine and Earl Palmer, Gordon, Sinatra sideman Irv Cottler, Bernard “Pretty” Purdie,

“I thought any idiot could be a rock drummer. Of course, I was totally wrong.”

Benny Benjamin, Al Jackson, Roger Hawkins.

“These are guys that have exquisite time. When they sit down to play, you feel the groove so deeply you don’t even know it’s there. What I find in their playing—and I’d love to find it more in mine but don’t—is that thing that’s the *illusion*. It’s when you think, ‘Oh, that’s wonderful, that’s... this.’ Then you think, ‘No, it’s not this. It’s... that.’ And on another listen, you realize, ‘No, it’s not that either.’” It’s *nothing*, it’s what’s implied, what’s skillfully left out.

So it isn’t surprising that the musician Keltner calls “my partner” is a near-genius of the implicit, of the space between notes. “The freedom Ry Cooder gives me,” says Keltner, “any drummer would envy. With Ry, I’ve always gotten lots of

encouragement to go to the left." Cooder's spontaneity can give Keltner fits, but he responds to it with a wonderfully lurching, staggering, stop-and-go sprawl—the ideal, elastic support for Cooder's syncopated guitar.

"We're a system," says Cooder, "we're MIDIed up together." He laughs. "Keltner'll give you lots of rope, yeah, but I'll tell you something else—if he doesn't like something, the fun meter goes *down*. And when Keltner's fun meter goes down, it's as though time just ground to a halt. You can't just say, 'C'mon, Jim, groove and dig it.'"

So how could Keltner be so successful in the studios, so adaptable?

"You know," says Cooder, "I've often wondered about that."

Nor is Ry Cooder any better at feigning interest. "Ry's a first-take player," says Keltner. "Two takes, maybe; three, you're pushin' him. Ry can't relate to someone who has to sit down and figure out a part, so he loves that I don't need to play strict parts—with him and his two takes, I rarely have *time*. Guys come up to me: 'Man, you sound so loose with Cooder.' That's 'cause I'm hangin' on for dear life. They say, 'That was fantastic, the way you played across the bar on Cooder's such-and-such,' but that's not planned—that's me going, 'Whoa shit, we're at the end of the bar already, what now?'"

If Cooder's neo-traditionalist songs are starting to hiss and bubble with sampled and sequenced sounds (listen to Grammy-nominated "Low-Comotion" from 1988's *Get Rhythm*), it's due largely to Keltner. In 1983 a friend loaned the drummer a DMX and a LinnDrum, "and I got all the way into 'em. I met [drum-programming pioneer] Jimmy Bralower and watched him every chance I got." By 1986 Keltner was a monster on the E-mu SP-1200, his fingers flying over its tiny buttons.

"What Keltner used to do with his hands and feet," says Cooder, "he can now do exponentially with his hands and feet. He can trip on into infinity, accompanying himself—because you know he doesn't like to play the beat, that's so prosaic, he'd rather have a replica of himself playing the beat so he can go behind it, play around it."

"Stenographer of Soul"—that's what Jackson Browne's musicians dubbed Keltner one night. "Listen to 'Lawless Avenue' on *Lives in the Balance*—that's me playing my SP-1200 live, unprogrammed. I didn't even know it was a live session. Jackson goes, 'Where are your drums, man?' I go, 'You wanted drums? Aw, I'm real sorry... But look, let's try the machine.'

## FIFTY-FIVE SNARE DRUMS

**U**PSTAIRS in his English Tudor house near L.A. Griffith Park, Keltner's got an E-mu Systems SP-1200 sampling drum machine, E-mu's Emulator III sampling unit, and Ensoniq ESQ-1 and Sequential Prophet 2000 keyboards. "Sampling's become my passion, my hobby, my way of making up melodies and grooves and stuff. I don't usually sample drums. I don't need to—I play drums. I'll just go into my living room or somebody's studio, get me a good mike and a li'l preamp, and go to town, just sample everything I can get my hands on": punching bags (Ivan Neville's *If My Ancestors Could See Me Now*), gamelan gongs (Cooder's "Low-Comotion"), log drums (the *Brewster's Millions* soundtrack) and other miscellanea from a near-Smithsonian of odd percussion ("my barrage of crap"): metal *guiros*, bells, whistles, tambourines, triangles, African talking drums, household oil squeeze-cans and the purported "biggest gong in L.A.," the 38" Chinese brass monster that summoned Kong in Dino De Laurentiis' 1976 ape remake. On Steely Dan's "Josie," Keltner played a garbage-can lid; on the





Jackson goes, 'Machine! Oh Lord, what are we gonna do?' I convinced them to set me up in a little chair on the drum riser," and with David Lindley, Waddy Wachtel and Danny Kortchmar stalking the room, guitars blazing, Keltner sat "at my typewriter, typing—but with these enormous, wonderful drum sounds coming out..."

Today, if he can squeeze his samples into a session, he will: "It's just my prerogative, it's no big deal. Yes, I'd prefer playing drums most of the time, but I also like having fun with the machine. It's a viable, a serious tool for making some music, and to call drum machines a necessary evil is dangerously misinformed. Necessary evil, that's an A&R man; a drum

Wilburys' "Rattled," a refrigerator rack. He often uses two bass-drum pedals; on Pat McLaughlin's "Is That My Heart Breaking?", the second pedal's clanking on a *brake drum*, for Christ's sake—and if you can't hear Dolly Parton's hatbox on her *Here You Come Again* LP, it don't mean Keltner ain't playin' it. Whatever it takes; Keltner's not proud.

He hoards trap drums, too, endlessly shuffling. His "fairly usual" setup: double-headed 22" bass drum, 14"x14" or 16"x16" floor tom and 8"x12" rack tom, all from Don Lombardi's Drum Workshop; for his toms, he uses Pureussion's RIMS drum mounts. The snare is either a 5" Noble & Cooley, a 15" brass Drum Workshop, or both—Keltner often plays two snares at a time; on Richard Thompson's "Lover's Lane," he plays three.

That's the nucleus, here's the *megillah*. Fifty-five snare drums; 10 bass drums, including "a beautiful '30s 28" Ludwig & Ludwig I just used with Maria McKee"; 25 tom-toms (apologetically: "I just unloaded a bunch; that's all that's left"); 65 to 70 Paiste cymbals and, stashed away, 60 Zildjians. "But I don't play them anymore; they're mementoes."

machine's a *fabulous* thing to have.

"That little drum track to 'Got My Mind Set on You' took me about 30 seconds to figure out and 10 minutes to program. [Co-producer] Jeff Lynne was saying he didn't think drum machines could swing like a real drummer, and I said, 'Sure they can, listen.' It wasn't anything complicated—it wasn't *anything*—which is how lots of the great rock 'n' roll hits have been made over the years. Just the bare minimum of effort.

"So I'd say this: Right now as we speak, this has got to be about my most favorite time of all. Everyone is finally comfortable with the fact that machines are here to stay. And then there's the purists who say, 'Screw the machines, we don't want a machine in the building, we're gonna play some real music, live,' and I go, 'Right on, that's where I *came* from, I *love* it.' So what more could I ask for? I can use the machines, or play my heart out on the drums. It couldn't be better."

How long will he play? "Listen, let me tell you about a drummer I know. Sol Gubin just turned 60. Sol's a real New Yorker, an opinionated 60-year-old New York Jewish man; he'll tell you what he thinks in a New York second. And I love him, man, I really love this cat. 'Cause if you're gonna be that way, back it up, baby, back it up or get outta here. And Sol can back it up.

"For years I wondered, who was this mysterious studio guy playing on all these great radio songs? Tony Bennett's 'What the World Needs Now'—real big-band sophisticated New York stuff. I'd watch 'The Carol Burnett Show' 'cause I loved the sound of the drums, I knew it was the same guy, I'd sit in my living room saying, 'Damn, that makes my *teeth* feel good.' Finally I found out who it was. I met him. I went over to his house. I said, 'Man, do you have any of those old Carol Burnett

CONTINUED ON PAGE 103

# PHIL AND SABIAN. HEAR THE DIFFERENCE.

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# Pheeroan akLaff

Cosmic consciousness from  
the sparkplug of new jazz

By Ted Drozdowski

**P**HEEROAN AKLAFF'S NEW album—a Coltrane-style blowing session—is coming out on a Japanese label, and he says that figures: “After all, Japan is kind of the leader in this field, in supporting this music. In fact, the Japanese are the leaders of a lot of things. Aren't they? Hah-hah!”

Why's that?

“Well, it's really pretty simple.” Eyes flash-

bodies, over a period of time they can be more potent and aware in everything they do in their life.”

So you're saying the Japanese are hipper because they eat sushi?

“No, no. Mainly seaweed. Seaweed is the real deal.”

Do you eat seaweed?

“Yeah, so I'm next.”

Okay, Lords of Karma, throw open the Gates of Higher Consciousness, 'cause Pheeroan akLaff is knockin'—with a pair of Vic Firths. From Detroit to Dakar, akLaff's been chasing the big bam boom into the mystic for more than 14 years. But “rock was the first kind of work I got as a drummer,” recounts the prince of new jazz's improvising percussionists. “I mean, I wanted to play more jazz types of music, but because I could play rock and funk, people wanted me to play it with them, so I did. The thing I found out about this work then is that when you start being known as a player, you're usually called for your associations. So you spend a lot of time doing what you were last doing. You have to reach for those other things, those things you really aspire to.

“You know what the yogis and sages and other folks try to describe when they talk about enlightenment?” he asks, leaning across an angular table in Soho's Knitting Factory. “It's the same with music for me, when things begin to come home. I think of music as just one other rate of vibration that is different from more solid light and matter as we know it.” He pauses, nods gently and tosses back a few more corn nuts, bar munchies du jour in the Naked City's most elegant performance dive.

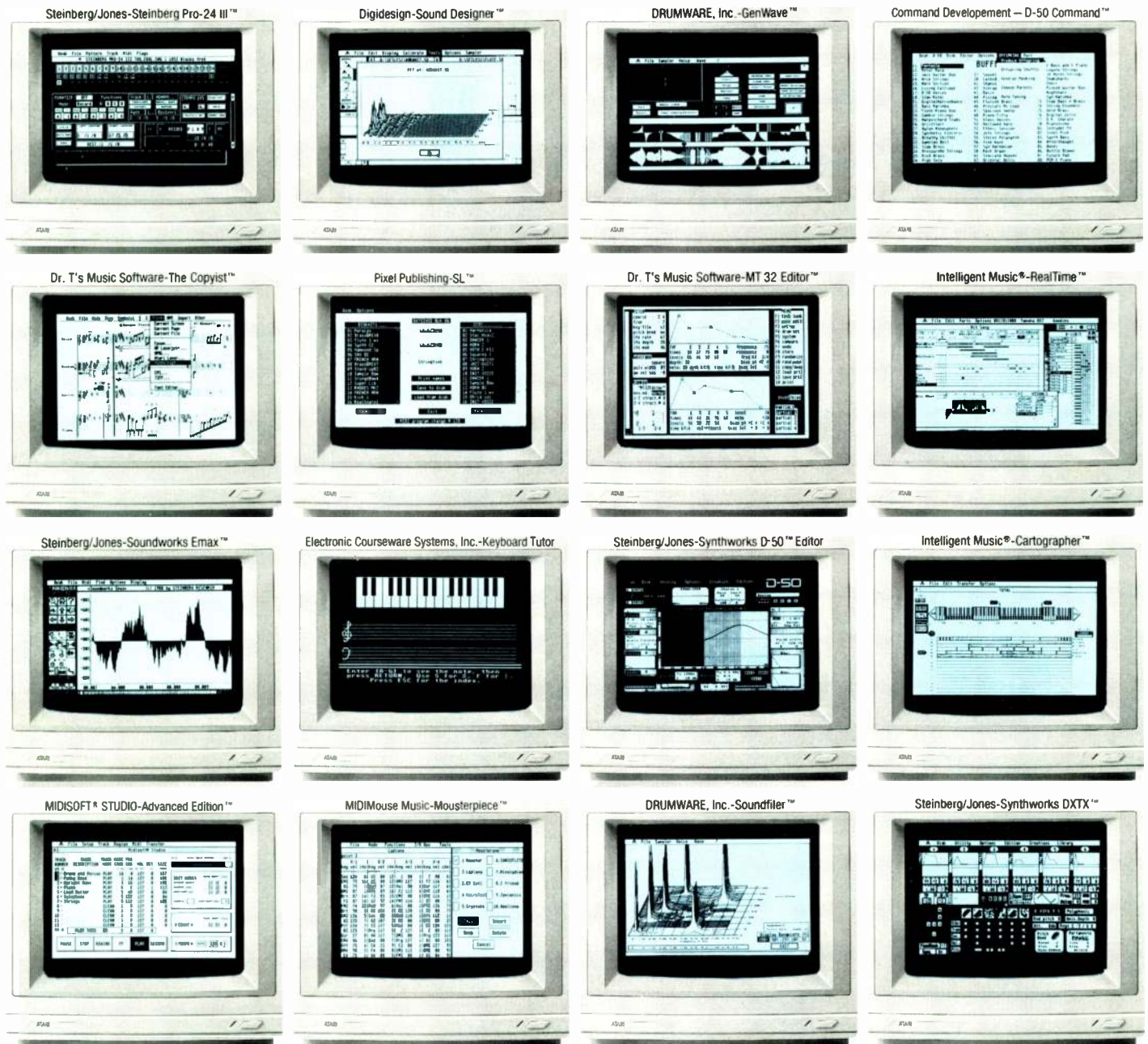
“When I was 20,” he continues, “in 1974 or so, I started reaching. I moved from Detroit to New Haven to work with Leo Smith, and Anthony Davis was in his band at the time. Through working with those guys and being



BETH B

ing, Professor akLaff pops a few corn nuts in his mouth, crunches and tells it like it is: “The world is predominantly water, and that's the most sophisticated resource for minerals. To some degree, if one can go to the highest mineral resource and assimilate that into their

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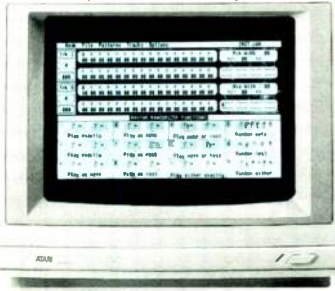
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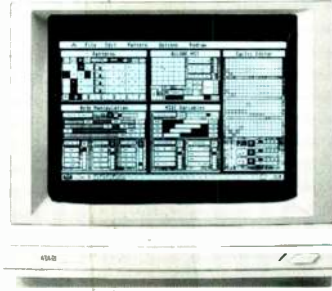
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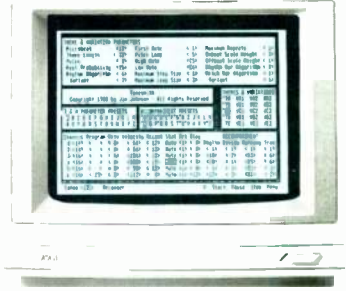
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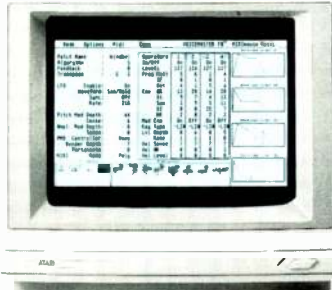
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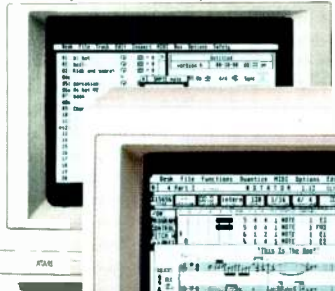
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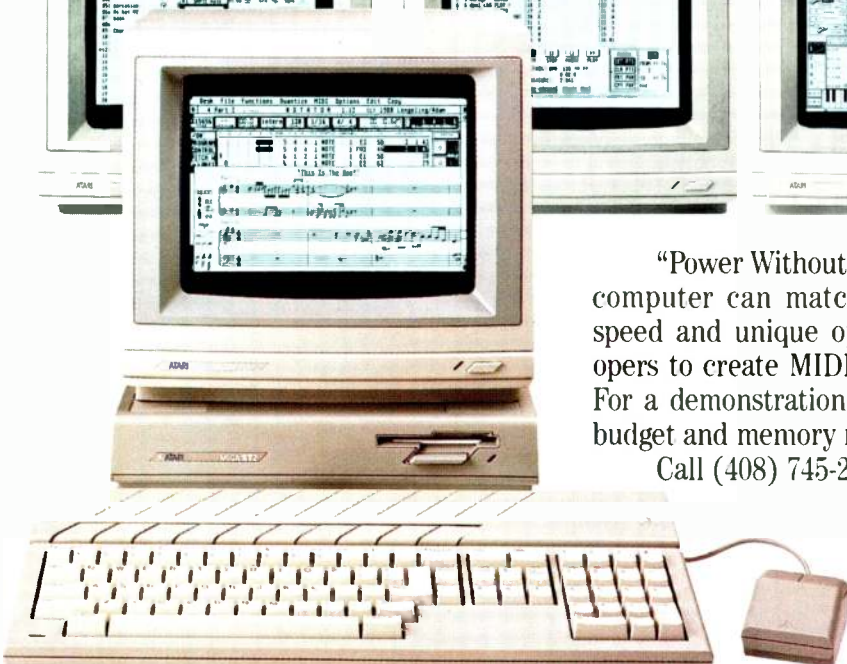
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part of that creative scene, I had no trouble getting work when I moved to New York." Forty-seven albums later, the gigs are still pouring down. Right now akLaff's a supporting player for Noel Pointer, Sonny Sharrock and Tom Pier-son, and the leader of his own Key One band (which includes percussionist Aieyb Dieng, alto man Carlos Ward, violinist Charles Burnham and bassist Ira Coleman). But he's played and recorded with Oliver Lake, Henry Threadgill's Sextett, New Air, Michelle Rosewoman, James Newton, Jerome Harris, Craig Harris—altogether an entire chapter from jazz's new music/composing direc-

tory. He's also played on albums by popster Michael Gregory Jackson, and recorded three LPs as a leader: *House of Spirit: Mirth* for the small Passin' Thru label, his own pop gamble *Fits Like a Glove* for Gramavision, and the new *Sonogram*, which Japan's Tokuma Rec-ords will release.

AkLaff says that making *Sonogram*, which pools saxists John Stubblefield and Carlos Ward, Sharrock and bassist Ken-ney Davis, "summed up my whole en-dearment for John Coltrane and what he was and is. It just came out sounding so Coltrane-esque. I mean, you put to-gether Stubblefield and Sonny, who have

the same weight as being men of a great era, and those spirits come in and start taking over. And when those spirits are present, the first note can start at such a high place that you have no choice but to gravitate toward the brightest light."

When akLaff yielded to the pull of New York's glare, he was known as the "quiet drummer. Steve McCall and some other guys would say, 'Hey, here comes the quiet drummer.' Now you'd never believe it. But it was because I was just tippin', playing real quiet, doin' all this out music. Really soft. *Teesch-pa-da-pa, chick-a-poppa, ti-ti-ti-ti*. Now I play with some different textures. I have to do a lot of clear, expressive playing, because if I don't do it now, when am I gonna do it?

"You see, the thing I always liked about drumming was the language im-plied by it. Not quite the direct language of Yoruba, communicating with the drums for real, but another language that's kind of close. As a kid, when my dad would play jazz records around the house, I'd hear African-American drum-mers and think, 'Humm, these guys are really talkin', talkin' to each other.' Of course Max Roach is the major talker. He's got more to say than anybody. But I also enjoyed Baby Dodds, Sid Catlett, guys who spent a lot of time talking."

AkLaff's chops don't rest much, either. When he's full up and moving, he packs the power of a steam engine with the precision of a bumblebee: flying and stinging, galloping and swinging, in any context. His cymbals chatter as much as shimmer, and his tight, concise snare does a convincing Art Blakey when it's not speaking its own dialect. Right foot chugging, hands splaying a delicate rumble across his toms, he'll swing toward a cymbal, freeze mid-stroke, hold back, hold back and crash at the cusp where taste and time meet.

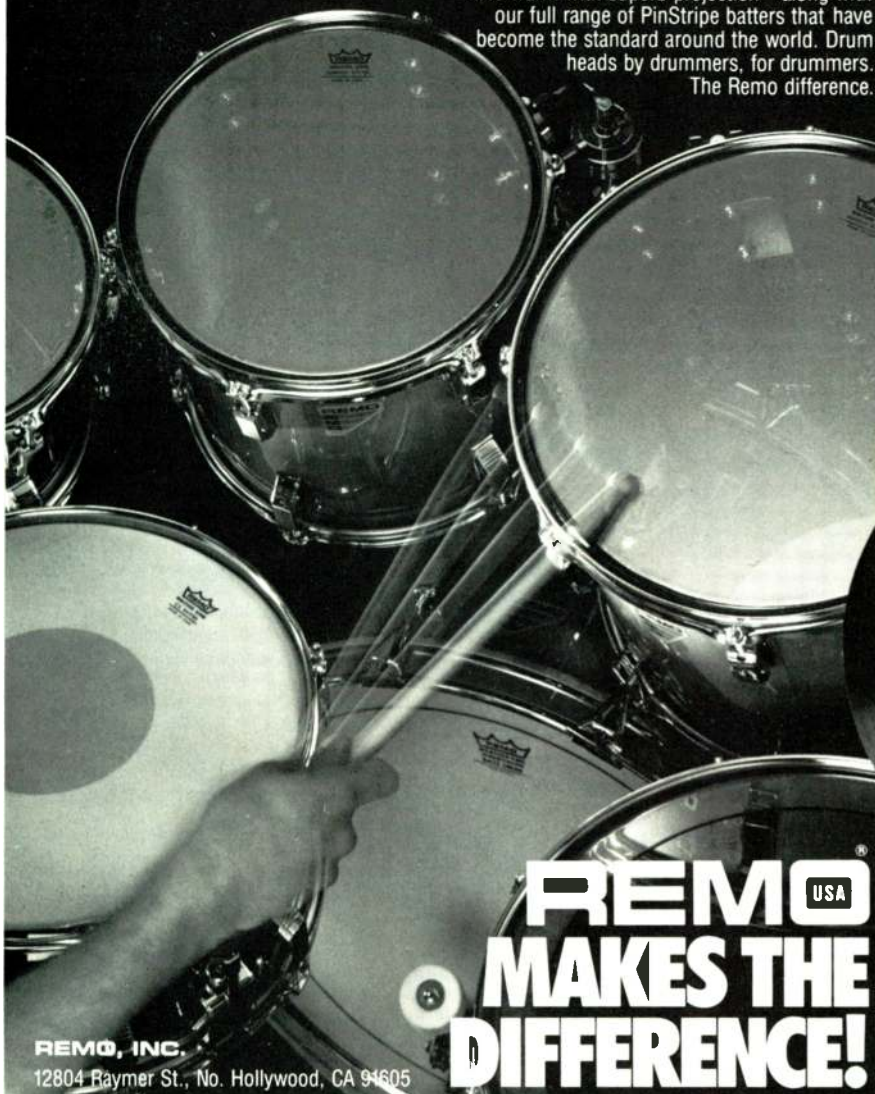
His uncanny ability to bang out ballet at the crossroads of the sonic and the spiritual has been no more apparent than in Threadgill's and Sharrock's bands, which use two full-kit drummers for thrust and color. With Threadgill, akLaff was paired with the slightly more tradi-tional Reggie Nicholson. With Sharrock, he knocks around with Abe Speller, one of the instrument's unsung heroes.

"It may look tough, but playing with another kit drummer is no big deal if you have good time, and the other drummer has time that's as or nearly as good. It's all in the breathing," akLaff offers. "As a kid I had a heart murmur, so my heart has always been polyrhythmic.

"What you have to do is understand your environment. Be as receptive as

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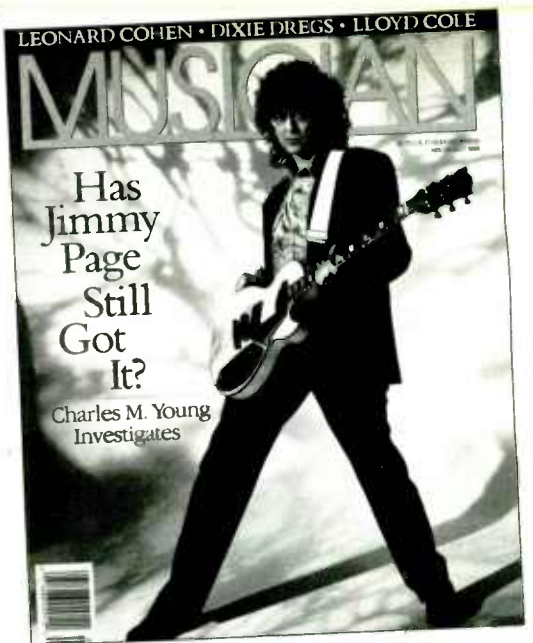
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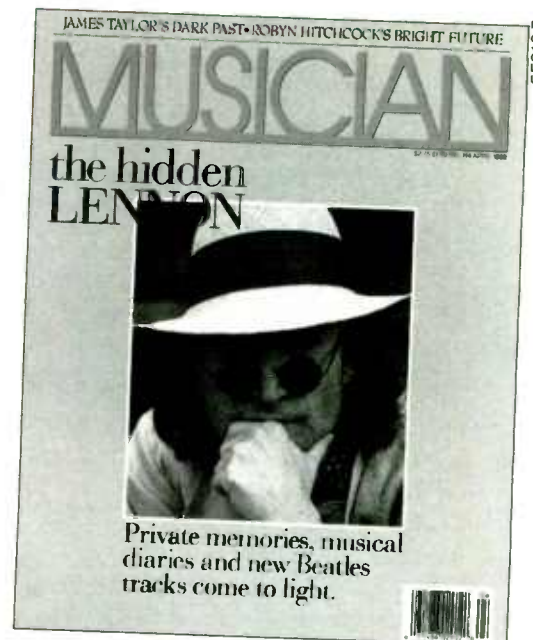
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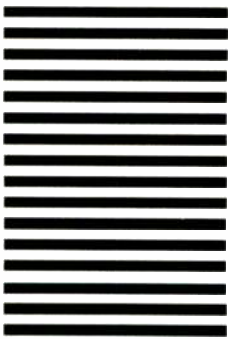
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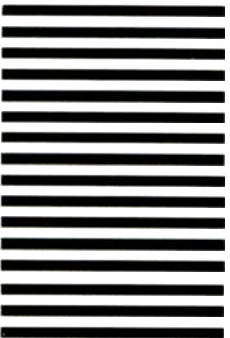
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"If you can project the appearance of absolute time, everyone will be with you. But you need to develop that sixth sense. There are times you can't hear certain instruments, but you still have to know where they are and when they're there. You just have to. So you've got to be breathing with the folks you're playing with, really in tune. And then of course there's peripheral vision. I can see way back here," he says, drawing a finger well past his ear. "You have to be keen about noticing body language. Don't look down at your drums. See the world. Feel the body heat onstage.

"You see, my approach is being there for the music," he says, scratching his well-trimmed beard. "I'm not into being Mr. Virtuosity. After all, the jury is still out on me in much of the music community. Whether I'm part of a certain level or style or scene. All the people I work with are very different from one another. Even though Henry Threadgill and Oliver Lake, for example, play the same instrument and are from the same era, their approach is totally different. So's Sonny's and Noel Pointer's. I think what happens in the music community is that styles overtake ideas about musicality, be it bebop, funk, fusion, whatever. The industry hustles musicians into believing styles are more important than music. What's hot, what sells, you know?"

"I like to push the music to another place. I like to play my own licks." He chuckles. "There was a time when I worried about learning different things, figuring out stuff. I stopped running into that problem when I gave up my whole personal involvement, my preoccupation about what was coming out as notes."

AkLaff remembers the very day: "It was in 1979 when I was with Oliver Lake at the Empty Foxhole in Philly. I realized for the first time that there was a greater force coming through me than I could ever imagine. So I just let it go. I realized, 'Hey, this is not about me doing anything. It's about the music.'

"Of course there's still some things

## SEAWEED, NOT FISH

**P**heeroan akLaff invokes the spirit on Sonor drums. Depending on the gig, he uses an 18" or 20" bass; 10", 12" and 14" toms or 12", 13" and 16" toms; and a 5" snare. His cymbals are Sabians, with a distinctive Rocktagon prominently perched to the fore. Cowbells by Joba; and his sticks are Vic Firths, of course.

technically I would like to do, like being able to reproduce everything I hear. You know there's the ability to hear something, and then the ability to reproduce it. One is never complete without the other. I listen to concert pianists a lot, because my brother, Eric, is one—and maybe that's why I like working with guys like Anthony Davis and Leo Smith and all these guys who work in composed music. But technique is a strange thing. There are so many people who can play a lot of notes fast, a lot of changes fast, and they think that is technique. It's not. If you just fling out notes you're not saying anything. Technique is about

being in touch with the music, and then bringing your own thing to it."

He pauses, considers and moves on: "Another technique thing is the whole idea of swinging or not swinging, which I think is kind of interesting. Because jazz has this thing of, 'Is it jazz yet?' Which I think is ludicrous, because originally swinging was sort of meant to weed out the non-players. Which it still does." He chuckles. "Another level of qualification, as far as I'm concerned, is if it's healing, expansive and hip. So it's not just a matter of swinging. You can have a seriously swinging group, but it's when

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56

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# Kenny Aronoff

John Cougar Mellencamp's  
heartbeat gets caught  
in the snares of obsession

By Alan di Perna

**K**ENNY ARONOFF LOOKS like a kid who's been offered a large box of chocolates as he surveys the seven snare drums neatly ranged on the studio floor. He's searching for the one that will throw the right punch into a medium-tempo track for Belinda Carlisle's new album, which Aronoff and a cadre of hand-picked players are cutting

of Aronoff's white, five-piece Tama kit. Kenny carefully adjusts the head tension while trading one-liners with the other players in his street-wise, vaguely East Coast accent. (He's originally from Albany but grew up in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.) Meanwhile, engineer Dave Leonard gets busy with the console EQ. The two men, who last worked together on John Cougar Mellencamp's *The Lonesome Jubilee*, soon have a tough, incisive snare thwack resounding from the studio monitors, instantly recognizable from any of his recordings with the Mellencamp band or Mitch Ryder, Brian Setzer and others.

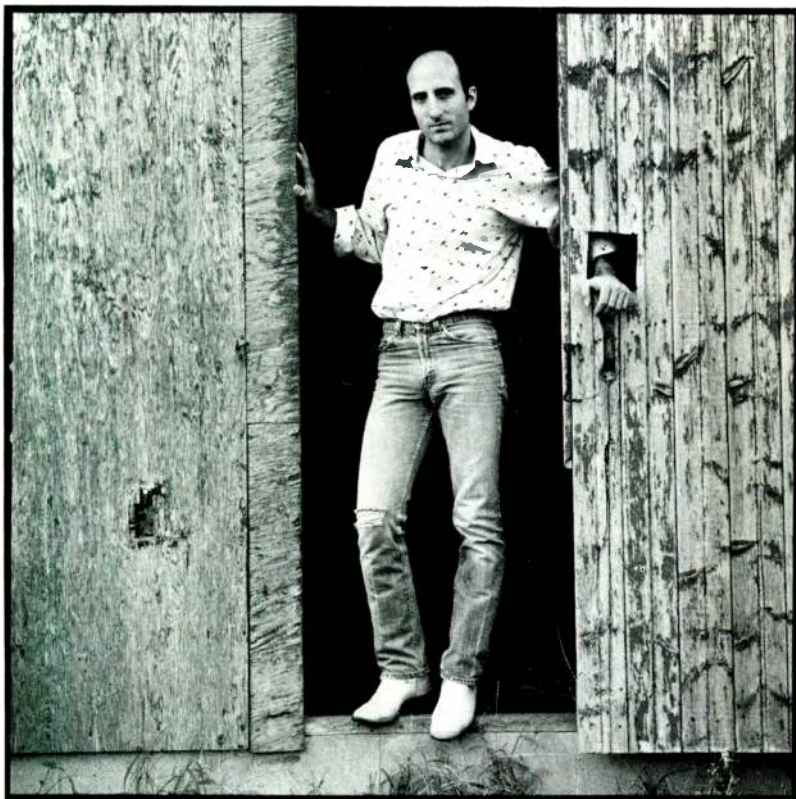
"Part of it is the way I tune," says Aronoff of his signature sound. "I don't muffle the snare drum. I let it ring. A lot of people don't like that. But I do, and thank God John does. It's really a nice sound—very open. If you hit too hard you choke that ring... you lose it. So you have to tune it right to make sure you get it. And for every take, I have to retune my drum."

When he says every take, you'd best believe it. Kenny Aronoff is obsessive about things like this. Beneath his good-natured, regular-guy exterior lurks a true detail freak. A drummer who says he loves click tracks and follows a regimen of exercise and massage when he's on the road. A man who isn't above taping two snare drums together in order to exploit the specific acoustic properties of each.

"That was on 'Rumbleseat' [from Mellencamp's *Scarecrow*]. I had a little five-inch Noble & Cooley snare which had an incredible crack, but it didn't have the ambience we wanted. And then I had a seven-inch wood drum made by Valley Drum Shop that had the ambience but not the crack. We'd been going through all kinds of stuff. Finally John just turned to me in frustration and said, 'Goddamn it, why don't you just duct-tape the two of them together?' I thought, 'Okay, I will.' I took the bottom head off the Noble & Cooley and the

at L.A.'s One on One Recording. After some deliberation he opts for one of his deep Tama maple snares. "This thing's a monster—check it out." With genuine pride, he flips the drum over to reveal the inch-thick laminated shell.

The elected drum is enthroned with the rest



PAUL ELLEDGE

top head off the seven-inch drum and taped them together. I had to raise my stool and all the other drums to accommodate this 12-inch snare I'd created."

Kenny credits Mellencamp with being the inspiration—both deliberate and accidental—for many inventive ideas during their nine-year association. "It's difficult to be continually creative when you're making your sixth record with an artist. But one thing I really dig about working with John is that our relationship has now reached a level that I don't have in any other musical situation. John pushes and directs me. He expects new things from me. So I'm challenged.

Whether he even tells me or not, I'm challenged. I can't just do my old tricks. Because he needs something new. He wants to progress."

Mellencamp came up with a fresh challenge on his new album, *Big Daddy*. For the first time, the band went into the studio without rehearsing or cutting a single demo. "I was in the studio a total of 16 days for the whole project. We were literally doing a song a day. See, John had not intended to put out an album so soon. When we were on tour, he said we were going to take two years off. But the material just came to him. He started writing these great songs. And if you've

got the material, why not use it?

"What John was trying to get was a certain kind of feel that you only get when you play a song for the first time. Each day we'd get together in the control room and he'd play a new song. Everyone would have acoustic instruments. Me, I'd just come up with a part by tapping on my legs and chest and the floor. Then we'd go out in the studio and start recording. At least four or five songs on the album are first or second takes. Which means those were the first to second times we ever played the songs—period."

*Big Daddy's* seat-of-the-pants recording methodology was a far cry from *Scarecrow* in 1985. Back then, the band spent months learning hundreds of '60s and '70s rock songs just to build up a vocabulary before starting to rehearse the album. But in many respects, *Big Daddy* continues in the direction Mellencamp mapped on his last album, *The Lonesome Jubilee*, where folk instruments and soulful backing vocals cast a warm, homey glow on the music. This called for a new approach to the drums. Kenny's playing remained as aggressive as ever. But the drum sound became more compact to make room for the extra instruments and voices. On *Lonesome Jubilee*, the drums rely less on artificial ambience and more on the natural acoustics of Belmont Mall in Indiana—the studio where all of Mellencamp's records are cut. The room is one of Kenny's favorites.

"It's very live, but not a huge room. It doesn't present a tremendous amount of low end. It's got a shimmer to it that works really well for my sound."

Natural room ambience also defines the drum sound on *Big Daddy*. But here, Aronoff's playing is more restrained, to suit Mellencamp's surprisingly understated vocals. "Every day I wanted to say to myself, 'Come on, man, you're not kicking butt like you usually do.' But how can you do that when the song doesn't command it? A song with a title like 'A Void in My Heart' doesn't exactly call for John Bonham licks."

Aronoff, though, was hardly at a loss for appropriate drum techniques. Many of *Big Daddy's* songs feature delicately-phrased cross-stick work on the snare rim. Kenny saves the big snare hits for choruses and the fourth beat of selected verse measures. "I guess that really started on 'Paper and Fire' [from *Lonesome Jubilee*], where I was doing that kind of cross-stick stuff. What I did a lot on *Big Daddy* was use a brush and a stick, which is a nice combination."

Aronoff's encyclopedic command of

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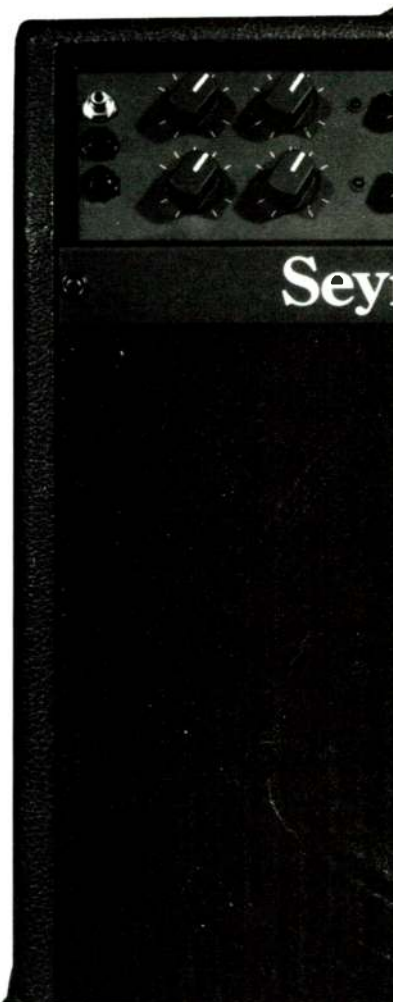
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drum idioms is perhaps his strongest musical suit. His playing is a compendium of classic rock styles. There are manic Keith Moon fills, uncluttered, effortlessly solid grooves à la Charlie Watts or Jim Keltner—a drummer Kenny particularly admires—and of course that signature ringing snare, which owes more to “Paperback Writer” than the Power Station. It all gets back to Kenny’s earliest garage bands.

“I was a self-taught drummer as a kid. Real street. I was playing in rock ‘n’ roll bands when I only had a snare drum and a cymbal. But my heavy formal education was in classical music, starting the summer after my sophomore year in high school when I began studying with Arthur Press of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. That’s when I got into all the classical stuff, you know: timpani, mallets, snare drum....”

Kenny went the whole route—a bachelor’s degree in music from Indiana University, augmented by studies at the University of Massachusetts School of Music, with Vic Firth of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and at the Aspen and Tanglewood music festivals. “Not knowing how to make it in rock ‘n’ roll, I figured you make a living as an orchestral player. But when I graduated there were

no orchestral auditions in the United States. None whatsoever. I had a timpani offer from the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra and another to play timpani in Quito, Ecuador.”

Fortunately, Kenny passed on both offers. More studies followed—this time on the drum kit with Alan Dawson of the Berklee College of Music and New York studio drummer Gary Chester. Then Kenny moved back to Indiana and formed a fusion band called Streamwinner, which never transcended the Midwest and Southern tour circuits. Kenny was en route to an audition for Lou Rawls in L.A. when he heard John Cougar was

looking for a drummer. By this point, of course, he had fully metamorphosed into that most hated of creatures in rock circles: a fusion drummer.

“I remember walking into a small room in John’s house with this huge drum set. John didn’t say anything right away, but after he hired me he said, ‘Okay, get rid of that drum, that drum, that cymbal, that drum, that cymbal....’ I didn’t understand it at first. But then I figured it out. I mean, I had 14 drums and 12 cymbals. I also remember I tried to play *really loud*, because I figured it was a rock audition. Ridiculously loud. I think I

CONTINUED ON PAGE 104

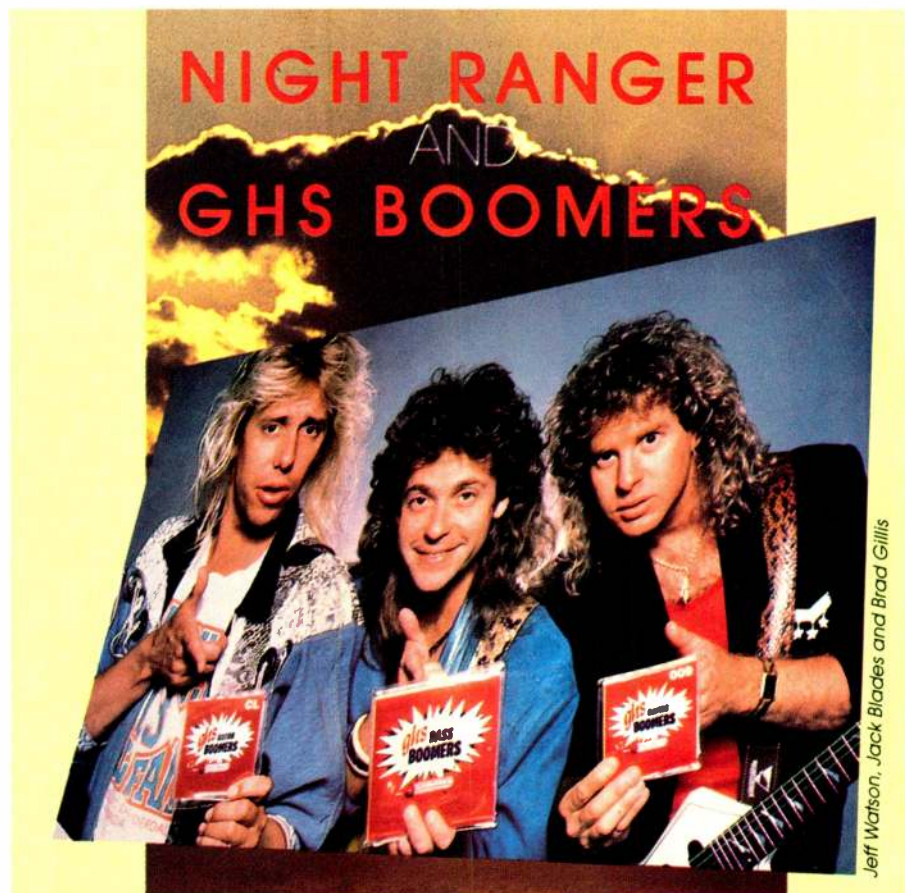
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**K**enny Aronoff plays a maple-shell Tama ArtStar II kit consisting of a 24x16” bass drum, 14” floor tom and (mounted left-to-right) a 12” power tom and 10” power tom. He uses the Pureussion rim system on all his toms. Heads are Remo white-coated Ambassadors for the tops of all drums and clear Ambassadors for the bottoms of the toms. On tour, he switches to clear Remo Emperors for the tops.

All stands are by Tama, including a double-beater Tama/Camco chain-drive kick pedal. Cymbals are all by Zildjian and include 19” crashes, a Z 20” power ride and 22” China Boys (mounted upside-down). Live, these get picked up by a Zildjian ZMC-1 miking system. Sticks are by Vic Firth.

On the road, Aronoff augments his kit with samples played back on a ddrum II, which is loaded with a custom sound cartridge prepared by ddrum from the *Scarecrow* masters. Trigger signals are generated by a May E/A miking system and a Black Knight bass drum pickup. From there, they go to a Marc MX-1 Plus triggering system and then to the ddrum.

Up onstage, Kenny gets his tempos from an Oberheim DX drum machine. For programming parts on album projects, he prefers the Alesis HR-16 drum machine. He also uses the Alesis MMT-8 sequencer and runs Mark of the Unicorn’s Performer sequencing software on his Mac SE. More on Aronoff’s technique can be found in his DCI video, *Laying It Down*.



Jeff Watson, Jack Blades and Brad Gillis

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# Terri Lyne Carrington

A Bright Young Bebopper  
Becomes a Hollywood Roll Model

By Robin Tolleson

**W**E'VE GOT THE heavies here today," talk-show host Arsenio Hall gushes as he slides by pianist Patrice Rushen up to his dressing room. Things may indeed be buzzing more than usual at Paramount Studios Stage 29 as the crew prepares for the all-star fusion outfit of drummer Terri Lyne Carrington. Carrington is Arsenio's house drummer. She



charms and astounds every show, at least for those lucky enough to be in the studio listening to the lady stretch out on a Jackson 5 groove during commercial breaks. Today she's got Rushen, Gerald Albright, Alex Acuna, Paul Jackson, Jr. and Keith Jones aboard for help.

Forget sexual stereotypes—Terri Lyne's got the power. Besides using solid technique, lifting the stick up high and hitting the drum consistently, she gets that sound by often turning the stick around in her left hand to play the butt end. Looking at her sticks after the show it's hard to tell which end is more worn out. "The balance seems better, more even," she says. "With the lighter end of the stick down here, I get more power. I need the balance like this because my right hand is more powerful than my left. Balance-wise and sound-wise, it's better that way."

Upstairs in the band's dressing room the talk centers around the 24-year-old drummer. "She's one of us," super-percussionist Alex Acuna laughs. "She can play. She's definitely a pro. When she's behind the drums it's like another Ndugu or Harvey [Mason], you know? She's got the gift."

"At the same time, she got the foundation of the jazz," chimes in bassist Keith Jones. "She can play any jazz tune. She knows all the heads. That's her dad; he's given her lots of support."

Sonny Carrington is a sax player of note from Medford, Massachusetts, who's played with the likes of Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt and Illinois Jacquet. And Terri's grandfather, Matt Carrington, played drums behind Fats Waller, Duke Ellington and Chu Berry. "Even when she was two and three years old, she had a great sense for the music," says Sonny. "When it was my turn to take care of her during the day, I'd pick her up and dance with her to keep the beat, listening to a lot of blues: Jimmy Witherspoon, Joe Williams, Jimmy Smith. I was playing one night at Lenny's on the Turnpike, and I took her with me. She was five. I was sitting in with Illinois Jacquet and Milt Buckner, and Alan Dawson was on drums. The next day she said, 'You know, I can play that.'"

She was soon trying to set up her grandfather's drum kit. "She begged me, and got me

to set the drums up. She could immediately keep time, four on the bass drum, and I gave her the cymbal swing beat and put a backbeat on the snare drum. And we'd play with some of those same blues records. For two years that's all we did. A drummer's got to be able to feel it. There's no sense in talking about technique if you can't keep time." At age eight, Terri Lyne found a teacher in nearby Lexington, Massachusetts, named John Wooley. After two years, Terri Lyne began studying weekly with Keith Copeland at Berklee College of Music. At 11 she began taking piano and theory from Dean Earl there, then

studied percussion with Pablo Landrum. At 12 she put her jazz jones away to study with the great show drummer Tony Tedesco. At age 14 she began studying with Alan Dawson, and it was from him she got that "polish," that "control," according to her dad.

"Technique is good so you're free to really play or express yourself how you want," says Terri Lyne of her studies. "Technique is whatever it takes for you to do that, get from point A to point B. For the most part, technique is just a tool. I don't play that real chops-oriented stuff that makes people's mouth drop open. My mouth drops open when I see

that, I'm really impressed. But I've always come from just a feeling.

"My chops at 14 probably were better than they are now. They were real. As far as jazz technique, my chops were real serious for a 14-year-old. I knew I could become even more serious about the instrument and aspire to be one of the greatest drummers, period. But at some point that wasn't something I wanted anymore. I decided I wanted to be recognized more as a complete artist. Drumming is just one way I express myself."

Right. And basketball is only one way that Michael Jordan expresses himself. "People want to stereotype me as a 'jazz musician,'" she continues, "and jazz is a solid foundation. But I always keep up with what's happening. By the time I left New York I was playing more contemporary things, with Lester Bowie, and writing more. I got kind of upset because I was always on gigs with people old enough to be my father or grandfather, and that was all I got called for."

With her nightly TV exposure, and high profile touring gigs with David Sanborn and Wayne Shorter under her belt, more appealing offers shouldn't be far behind. The Shorter tour and his *Joy Rider* album in 1988 made a lasting impression on Terri Lyne. Fourteen drummers had auditioned on the same kit before Terri sat down and nailed the gig. Shorter later said that the drums came to life when she played.

"Wayne never really told me what to play, but he let me know one way or another if he liked it or not. He talked in very colorful terms," Terri Lyne smiles. "He would describe the music as scenes, as part of life. So people had to be able to relate on that level. When I first started playing with him I desperately wanted to do a good job. Sometimes I wasn't satisfied with what I was doing, and didn't feel like it was connecting. There was more there that I wasn't getting, and it really bothered me. So I told him, 'Rather than disrespect your music, you can send me home if you want.' Wayne just looked at me like I had two heads or something. He said, 'It's only music.' I played a lot better after that."

As to how she approaches the drum kit, Carrington keeps the big picture in mind. "I never play patterns, or work out things over the drum kit. If I'm not inspired, I can sit down to the kit and not know what to do, sit down and feel pretty foreign to it. That's cool, because then when I am inspired, it's fresh. I love to watch Art Blakey, because Art does certain required licks most of the time that he plays. But he plays them fresh every time.

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"Understanding harmony is important," she continues, "even if you don't plan on writing. When you play different harmonic structures it makes you play differently as a drummer. I play different on modal songs for instance, the standards or songs that have constant II-Vs in them. When you play a modal song that has less changes, most drummers play more open. When you have changes moving all around and play a lot, it tends to get cluttered. Drummers aren't ignorant people, so they shouldn't be ignorant musically."

FIVE-FIFTEEN ROLLS around at Stage 29, and the studio is packed with rowdy, screaming patrons. Terri's band puts some crunch into the Beatles' "Blackbird," then funkaphizes her soulful "Human Revolution," a song inspired by her Nicheren Shoshu teachings. Later, PolyGram execs take Terri Lyne to a Melrose Boulevard restaurant where the back dining room is plastered with posters of *Real Life Story*, her first solo LP. It's a show of confidence in a talented performer and multidirectional album. The record features John Scofield, Wayne Shorter, Grover Washington, Jr., Gerald Albright, Carlos Santana, Hiram Bullock and Greg Osby, Carrington's former roommate, supported throughout by bassist Keith Jones and Patrice Rushen.

## TERRI LYNE'S SKINS

**T**erri Lyne Carrington plays Yamaha Power Recording Series drums. Her favorite is a rosewood set, and she also has cherrywood and black kits. "Those rosewood drums sound so good. The power toms are a little deeper than regular toms, and their sizes are 10", 12", 13" and 14" mounted toms, and a 16" floor tom. I play a 6 1/2" brass snare drum, and sometimes a piccolo brass snare. I have a 22" bass drum. I play Zildjian cymbals, a 20" K custom ride, 17" K dark crash, 17" medium thin crash, a 14" crash, and a K/Z combination of 13" high-hats. The top high-hat is a K and the bottom is a Z. And I have a very interesting 12" China type cymbal on the right. I like that a lot. China is neither crash nor ride, it's just China. It's a funky sound that I use as a color. I play Vic Firth sticks, the Harvey Mason model, and I use Remo drum heads. I play the Yamaha 700 series kick pedal, and the double kick pedal sometimes for those endings on the show. In electronics, I play some pads that trigger a Yamaha RX5 with cartridges. I use the RX5 because I don't have a sampler. I'm just using drum and percussion sounds. It sounds real good. Some people are like drum scientists, but I'm not. That stuff is important to a degree—shop talk is good, but there are too many people that depend on that."

"The instrumentation does vary, but the basic rhythm section is the same," Terri explains. "Whenever you mix singing and instrumental tracks people get confused, so I tried to do that in a way that makes sense. I use my voice as an instrument, just to get across the message of the song. I wasn't trying to compete with Aretha or Whitney Houston. I like that weird, wispy sound where the voice is used as a style. It isn't really featured. The music is the star."

Carrington doesn't have many regrets, but if you push her enough, she will admit to wanting to get into Sting's band. She auditioned for the group after

Omar Hakim left. "I felt like I played very well at the audition, and somebody else got the job," she says. "Sting called me and said, 'I really love the way you play, except your reggae seems a little weak to me.' I hadn't really played any reggae. I knew some of the things to do technically, but I wasn't comfortable. For me that was only a matter of application. I knew that if I got the gig, by the time we got out of rehearsal the reggae on his new record would be a piece of cake. That was a gig I wish I had gotten."

The next afternoon on the Paramount set, Terri Lyne Carrington reggae-fies  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 103

# EARL KLUGH



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# Michael Blair: Time

A noted drummer reflects  
on how important it is  
where your beat is placed

**F**EEL." THE AMBIGUITY of the word belies its importance. Drummers get hired and fired for having the right one, the wrong one, or none at all. Many players coming up now are learning how to sound like drum machines in hopes of getting work. Many artists won't go near players who don't sound human. An increasing number mix and match. It all depends... on everything.

believing that perfect metronomic pulses are the "ground zero" from which we calculate what feels ahead or behind.

I'm not going to break beats down into milliseconds. What I want to point out is the process of making choices, perhaps not always conscious, premeditated choices, but ones that come from practice, experience, intention and "feel." Players often do not articulate these notions in any other language than music, but here's how *this* player would address several individual drummers' contributions to how we hear "time" going by.

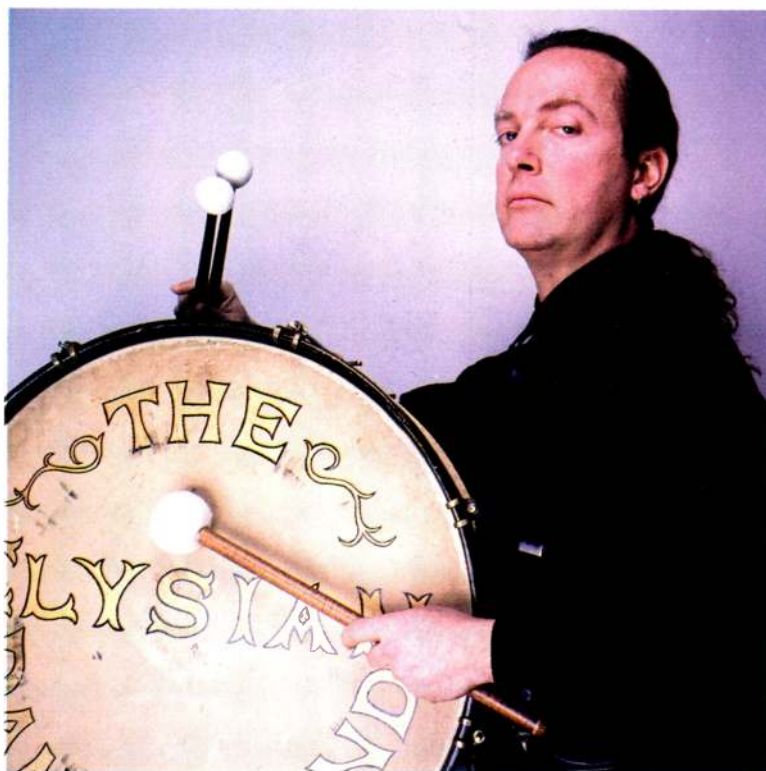
## Behind the Beat

SONG: "One Love Stand" from *The Last Record Album* (Little Feat, 1975)

DRUMMER: Ritchie Hayward

One of the Feat's strong suits has been creating the illusion of clutter without there being any. Little meanderings and conversational counterpoints never come around the same way twice. The germ of this particular tune lies in the rhythmic pull-offs in the electric piano and guitars. The off-beat idiosyncracies have a place to move away from because the bass and drums build a relaxed, strolling groove.

Perhaps the key to assembling all this activity is in Hayward's ability to lay down a confident, persistent beat without sounding nervous. The funk is in what is *not* there. The way they solved the forward-motion problem was by using catchy, almost backwards, rhythmic pushes. But, theatrically, there is a story to tell. It would be inappropriate to be in a rush. So, Hayward is "leaning" toward the back of the beat. He defines the sense of constant, patient flow. The romantic drama is played out by almost moving too slowly. The listener is allowed to go along for the ride, finish his/her drink and not get left behind.



ALDO MAURO

And nothing is constant. Consider how "feel" and "time" are adjusted to suit the music at hand. For argument's sake, I have chosen six recorded examples and divided them into three categories: behind the beat, on the beat and ahead of the beat. This is all relative to



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SONG: "Chewing Gum" from *Spike* (Elvis Costello, 1989)

DRUMMER: Willie Green

This rhythm track is built to frame the tuba as the bass-function instrument. The illusion of space makes it easier to hear the unique sonic qualities. The Nevilles' current drummer, Green naturally plays a groove with a lot of stretching room.

Also, this is one wordy song. If the parts were busy or smashed together, where would the lyrics go? So the off-beat percussion and sound effects link up with the "laid-back" snare hits to create a supportive environment that, hope-

fully, sounds interesting. Almost like a not-so-well-oiled machine. Haste would definitely make waste here. Green's tendency to be forceful, but again, patient, provides the essential foundation.

### On the Beat

SONG: "If I Fell" from *A Hard Day's Night* (The Beatles, 1964)

DRUMMER: Ringo Starr

Along with lyrics of yearning and difficult love, the reason for this song's existence is the exquisite vocal harmonies. Lennon and McCartney had a gift in the effort-

lessness of their contrapuntal singing.

As in many Beatle songs, the rhythm bed is based on acoustic guitar strumming. Sometimes the electric guitars would play hooks, solos and harmonic turnarounds. The chordal movement changes quickly under the subtly shifting melody. Ringo's supportive cross-stick/high-hat playing doesn't drag or push. The focus on the harmony/melody lines remains clear. Any disruptive accents or agitation would detract from the flow.

Because their roles were so well developed and balanced, the Beatles were a real band. The songs came first. Ringo's notoriety often overshadowed his substantial contributions. He served the music.

SONG: "Fast Car" from *Tracy Chapman* (Tracy Chapman, 1988)

DRUMMER: Denny Fongheiser

This song is unique in the relation of the cyclical acoustic guitar figure to the phrasing of the melody. Chapman uses a conversational rhythm in her singing to approach the listener. It is, also, as if she is talking to herself.

Had the music been constantly changing, she could not project her lyrics in a speechlike manner. The drummer's challenge is to find interest in simplicity. There is plenty of urgency in Chapman's voice alone. To get in the way would be a big mistake.

Denny Fongheiser makes strong choices here. The walking motion in his cross-stick/high-hat pattern allows the melodic rhythm to flow naturally. Chapman's vocal nuances are that much more apparent. He then decides to push the B-section/chorus, moving away from the calmness of the verse. When the dust settles ("...be someone..."), and the original pattern returns, it almost feels like the groove slows down. But what happens is the on-the-beat verse separated from the ahead-of-the-beat chorus creates tension.

### Ahead of the Beat

SONG: "Take It As It Comes" from *The Doors* (The Doors, 1967)

DRUMMER: John Densmore

This song is very short. The Doors were very dramatic. How can one be so theatrical in the wink of an eye? Well, employ staggered instrument entrances, three sections of music, extreme dynamic shifts, organ fills and an explosive vocal performance. Not bad for two minutes and 13 seconds!

Densmore played great cymbals, CONTINUED ON PAGE 104

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# Piccolo Snares

The Hottest Snare Drum in 1989  
Is Also the Smallest

By Rick Mattingly

**I** USED MY PICCOLO SNARE drum on all of the last Steve Winwood album and on Madonna's new record," says John "J.R." Robinson. "On all the dates I do, it's the first snare I put up. It gets the crack needed to cut through a 1989-type record, plus it still has depth. And the people I record for seem to really like it on their records."



There is no doubt that piccolo snare drums are a current Big Thing with drummers. They are being used by a number of prominent studio/session players, such as Mickey Curry, Steve Ferrone, Allan Schwartzberg, Jeff Porcaro and Chris Parker, and can also be found in the setups of U2's Larry Mullen, Jr., Talking Heads/Tom Tom Club's Chris Frantz and R.E.M.'s Bill Berry. Some drummers, such as former Weather Report/Sting drummer Omar Hakim, use a piccolo as an auxiliary snare drum. They will often have a regular or deep snare drum in the usual position, and have a piccolo off to the left side, using it for gunshot-type snare cracks.

Originally, piccolo snare drums measured 3" deep by 13" in diameter and were used primarily by orchestral players who needed a smaller,

higher-pitched sound than normal. While some drummers still feel that a true piccolo snare drum must be a 3x13, most current drums that are labeled as piccolos have a 14" diameter and are from 3½ to 4 inches deep. (A "standard" snare drum also has a 14" diameter but is from 5 inches to 6½ inches deep.)

Vinnie Colaiuta sees an advantage to the extra inch of diameter in current piccolo models. "I can get a lot of high-end crack," he says of his 3½" brass-shell Yamaha, "because it's a thinner drum. But somehow the note is still fairly meaty, probably because of the 14" diameter. I use my piccolo as often as possible. High-pitched snare drums are in vogue—at least for maybe another two weeks—so piccolos don't sound so drastically different to people as they would have a few years ago when everyone was using low-pitched drums, like on the Eagles records."

Another enthusiastic user of the Yamaha brass piccolo is Dave Weckl. "It works well for me both live and in the studio," Dave says. "It's very versatile and does things that you wouldn't expect from a drum that size. For instance, instead of just tuning it high all the time for the reggae-type of cracking, high-tone drum, it can be tuned down to sound big and fat. Live, I can't find anything that cracks as well. It has a transient tone that cuts through anything. In the studio, it always records well."

Yet another drummer who has had success with a piccolo snare is Michael Shrieve, who uses a 4x14 Premier steel-shell drum. "It's currently my drum of choice," he says. "I like the immediacy of response, and it cuts like a knife. I've always liked sort of a tight-sounding drum, and I like a snare drum to be crisp and bright. So the piccolo seems to give that to me. If anything, it's so bright that I have to muffle it a little bit."

It's interesting that Steve Jordan, whose high-pitched snare drum crack is considered



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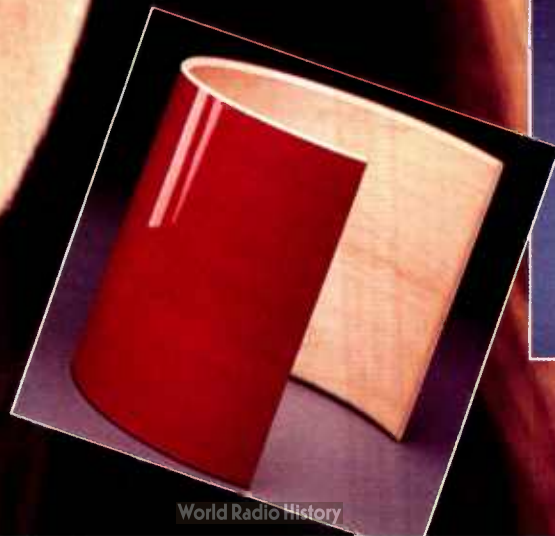
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one of his trademarks, does *not* prefer a piccolo drum. He uses a 7x14 Eames snare with a thick wood shell. "Most people are using piccolos to get that sound that I get with a deeper drum," he explains. "If you use a piccolo drum, you get the crack, but you have to put too much low EQ on it to get some depth, and that takes away from the crack. It never sounds as good as tuning a bigger drum up. But you've got to know how to tune a drum," he adds.

When Jordan does feel the need for a smaller drum, he goes to a vintage wood-shell 3x13 Ludwig. "It has a different kind of ring," he says. "I don't know how

to verbalize it. I use it with the snares off a lot, so it kind of has a timbale feel."

As much as a lot of drummers favor their piccolo snares, few of them rely on them as their only snare drum. On the Santana tour, Shrieve also had a couple of deeper snare drums for times when he needed a fatter sound. Colaiuta generally takes three snare drums to sessions—his 3½" piccolo, a 5" and a 7"—because, he says, "Sometimes it just sounds too thin. It can depend on the size of the room, where I am in the room, the miking, the engineer... I mean, you've got a lot of variables there." And Weckl tends to go to a deeper drum when he's

playing acoustic jazz. "I just like a different characteristic for that music," he explains. "The deeper drums have a warmer sound, and in acoustic jazz, a mushier sound is often preferred."

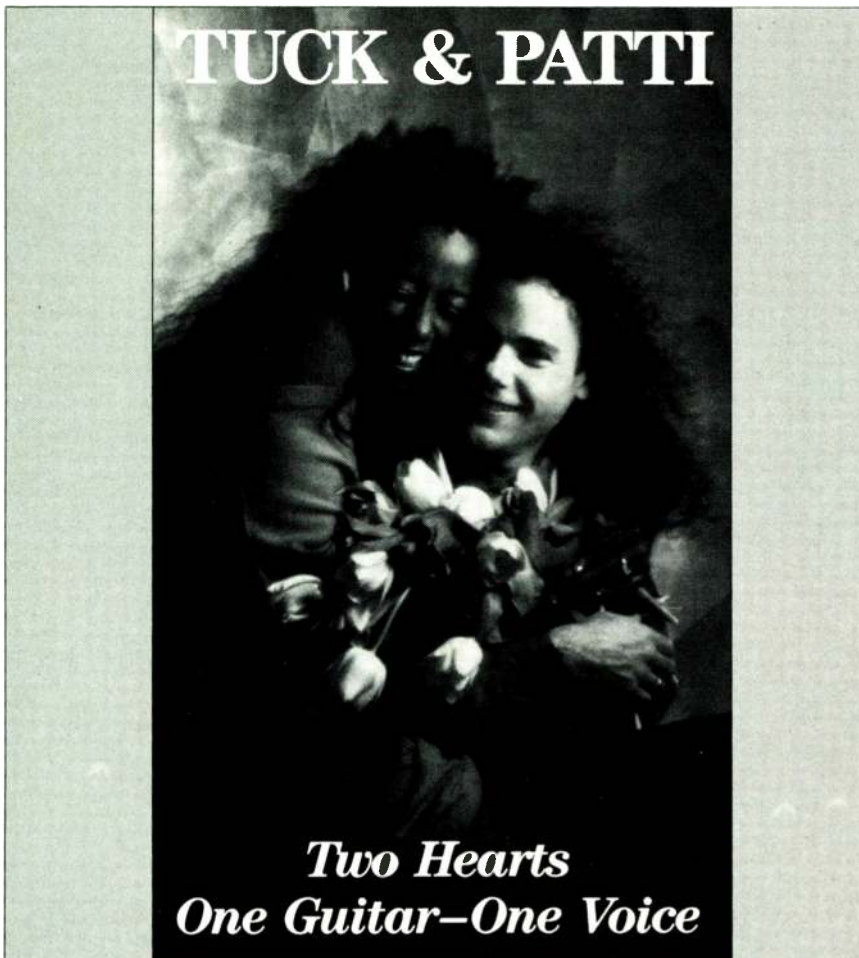
One important consideration regarding any drum is the material it is made from, and the design of the shell in terms of thickness, bearing edge, etc. However, Bob Gatzen, who designs drums for Noble & Cooley, feels that with piccolo snares, some of those factors are not as crucial. "When you change the thickness of a shell on a 7" drum by a thirty-secondth of an inch, that can really affect the character of the sound. But when you've got a shell that's only 3½" wide, more of the sound's character comes from the heads than the shell. The main difference is between wood and metal."

Peter Erskine found that to be true, and prefers the warmth of wood, but he also found a significant difference between shell depths. He had tried the 3½" Yamaha brass piccolo, but it wasn't quite what he needed. "I found it to be too shallow," he says. "The response is very immediate, and for certain uses it's great. But when you want the drum to open up beyond a certain point, it just doesn't give you the depth. That bottom head is too close to the playing surface."

"I'd had good experiences with a 4x14 wood-shell drum," Erskine continues. "I had used it in a variety of jazz and recording situations. Engineers loved it and I enjoyed playing on it. So I mentioned to the Yamaha designers that it was too bad they didn't have a 4x14 wood-shell drum. A few weeks later, Yamaha called to tell me that they had decided to make a 4x14 birch drum, and they are even going to call it the Peter Erskine model. Needless to say, I'm thrilled and honored."

Combining a deeper shell with a smaller diameter helps eliminate the problem Jordan spoke of: a lot of crack with no depth. Along those lines, Bob Gatzen designed a 6x12 drum for Noble & Cooley, called the Drumbali. "The deeper shell puts more air inside the drum," he explains, "so that if you hit it hard, it doesn't poop out on you. The first one I made was 4x12, and it sounded like a gunshot with no tone. But this 6x12 drum has tone."

Practically all of the major manufacturers have one or more piccolos in their line, and quite a few budget-priced models have appeared in the past year. Choose from a number of metals, from brass to stainless steel to chrome to Sonor's solid cast bronze (\$1,300), as well as various wood models, and a fiberglass model from Impact. One of the



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more interesting drums is Pearl's free-floating shell design, which is available in both brass and maple. If you want a vintage drum, you might try to find an old 4x14 Gretsch Max Roach model, or a 4x14 Ludwig Downbeat model. Speaking of Ludwig, they plan to reintroduce their classic 3x13 piccolo in both bronze and wood versions.

How long the piccolo trend will continue is anybody's guess. "It goes full circle," J.R. Robinson says. "There was a lot of high-pitched stuff in the '60s, and then everyone went to deep, meaty drums. But now, even on ballads, people want high-pitched drums again." But sooner or later some drummer who's sick of high-pitched snare drums is going to make a hit record with a deep snare drum, and sure as anything, the pendulum will start to swing back. **M**

**CARRINGTON** from page 95  
the beat of the "Posse"'s first tune, laying down a powerful rim shot, deft high-hat impressions, with a tough four on the floor. The look in her eyes says, "How's this, Sting?" No crisis of confidence here. **M**

**KELTNER** from page 81  
tapes?' 'Sure,' he says, and plays them, and I fall on the floor and go, 'YEAAHH! That's the stuff! Listen to that!'  
"At 60, man, Sol Gubin is a great drummer, just a great all-around drummer. Every fill is different. The tone of his drums is so beautiful; they ring, but with the prettiest sound, and the snare drum pops, and since I met him, see, I've been picking his brain like mad. He's going to help me get his old bass-drum sound; he plays with both heads on the bass and gets this beautiful tone from it, with a big *sock* in the middle. He plays it like Earl Palmer used to tell me: 'You want to play bass drum, you got to know how to do it; you play it down a little bit and then you hit it, hard.' Sol's from that generation: Earl Palmer, Irv Cottler, these old guys who sit and talk and talk and *talk* about drums with these ooold... loowwww... voices. It just fascinates me, I love it, and they play so measured, so fine.

"What I'm trying to say is, we shouldn't be bothered or worried by age. We should embrace it. I feel the music a lot more now than when I was younger; a song means so much more to me. Nowadays I go in, I listen to the song, and I give every ounce of what I've got. Which is substantial, man, 'cause I'm an old, old cat." **M**

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## ARONOFF from page 91

broke three sticks and a cymbal and we only played three songs.”

Freeing himself of the muso taint was no easy task, but Kenny ultimately beat the urge to overkill. “It took me about two years to learn how to play rock ‘n’ roll the way it was proper for the John Cougar Mellencamp band. But I could make the transition because I went back to my roots. Back to that Charlie Watts, Keith Moon, Creedence Clearwater approach to rock ‘n’ roll. So now there’s this very schooled part of me, but also this really raw street thing. Which happened by accident, I guess. I did a 360. Or maybe it was two 180s... But sometimes when I want to get into that raw frame of mind I try to play the drums as if I weren’t a drummer.”

Kenny has been maintaining a fairly non-stop session schedule for the past two or so years. He’s recently completed projects with Marshall Crenshaw, the BoDeans, ex-Go-Go Charlotte Caffey, Mike Penn (Sean’s brother) and Holly Knight, among others. His session drumming is studiously supportive, carefully integrated into the song and production. But at the same time, it’s unmistakably Kenny.

“It’s not like I make a conscious effort to sound like me. I hit a drum very aggressively, and my personality is going to come through no matter what. But on each session I do, the music dictates my approach. Unless, of course, a producer says, ‘Kenny, this singer sounds country, but I want you to sound like a rock ‘n’ roller regardless of what you think you should do.’ That’s when you take direction and play accordingly.

“I really enjoy working with different producers. The more studio work I do, the better I understand my instrument and recording. So the more valuable I am when I do sessions for John. Every time I get back together with him I’ve learned something new. So it’s very healthy for me to be doing this. Getting into production is probably going to be the logical step for me at some point. But right now, I’m just so much a drummer. That’s my main thing.”

## BLAIR from page 98

dancing around the grooves. He could pack a back beat, too. But, to me, the Doors were a storytelling band. The accumulative effect of the minimalist keyboards, blues-dream guitar and Morrison’s poetry forced Densmore to combine spacey with bar-band muscle. He did it.

The Doors were obsessed with communication. There were things they *had* to tell you. No resigning oneself to an unchangeable reality here. In this case, by leaning forward on the beat, the groove added impatience to an already anxious environment. Anything can happen, nothing remains the same.

SONG: “I’m Gonna Love You, Too” from *Parallel Lines* (Blondie, 1978)

DRUMMER: Clem Burke

Blondie could take the adrenaline of youth, pump Brit-Pop into it, slam through ‘50s chord changes and get you involved. This song is about winning a reluctant lover. Playful aggression is a necessary ingredient: forward motion toward the desired goal.

Burke’s choice of pushy surf-punk licks fit the picture. He plays the hooky (and useful) motorboat grooves of new wave. The entire band knew what

sounds to incorporate into their world...carnival organs, short, tight bass notes and drums recorded pretty flat (no big noise gates, reverbs or treatments that would slow time perception or take up too many frequencies). On this tune, they were in a hurry, and Burke knew the best short-cuts.

WHY BE NON-partisan? Everything is a choice. The drummers in this story truly shaped the sounds of their groups. By playing with “time,” they taught us how to listen. **M**

*Michael Blair has been involved in musical “decomposition” as drummer/percussionist with Tom Waits and Elvis Costello. He also works with producers Hal Willner and T-Bone Burnett. His other recording credits include Leo Kottke, John Zorn, Dagmar Krause, Arto Lindsay and Syd Straw.*

## Electronic Drum News

**T**HE BIG NOISE IN ELECTRONIC drum triggering is the advent of FSRs (Force Sensing Resistors). Take the **drumKAT**, for instance, which has 10 gum-rubber playing pads laid out in a cute ‘n’ playable kitty-cat configuration. Along with this, you get nine trigger inputs. The **drumKAT** will take the signals presented at these inputs and convert them to outward-bound MIDI signals. For every pad and trigger, you can program an independent MIDI channel, notes (up to three, in all kinds of stacked and rotating modes), a velocity curve and a gate and delay time. The **drumKAT**’s four MIDI outputs can function autonomously, or as two pairs for 32-channel operation. It also gives you two mergeable MIDI inputs, which come in handy for use with its built-in sequencer. The **KAT**’s whisker for \$995.

FSRs also turn up in the Hotz MIDI Translator that Atari is planning to market. According to inventor Jimmy Hotz, the device will have its own MIDI ports and be able to perform most of its functions without an external computer and software. Sensitive to touch as well as sticks, the Hotz Box (as many call it) is designed to do a lot more than act as an electronic drum controller. And if you’re only interested in triggering drum sounds via MIDI, you’d be moving to Overkill City if you bought the high-rent, 128-pad Hotz Box that Atari is planning to release initially. But reportedly there are also \$800/32-pad and \$200/16-pad models on the way, either of which could make an ideal multi-pad controller.

Beyond FSRs, there are also new analog triggers, including **Drum Workshop**’s Bozzio Pad, based on a scheme for isolating piezos developed by Terry Bozzio and which was previously incorporated into one of **Roland**’s pad devices. The DW pad uses a three-way

configuration consisting of two rim areas and a five-inch by five-inch central pad with individual trigger outs for each area. Not pad for \$149.

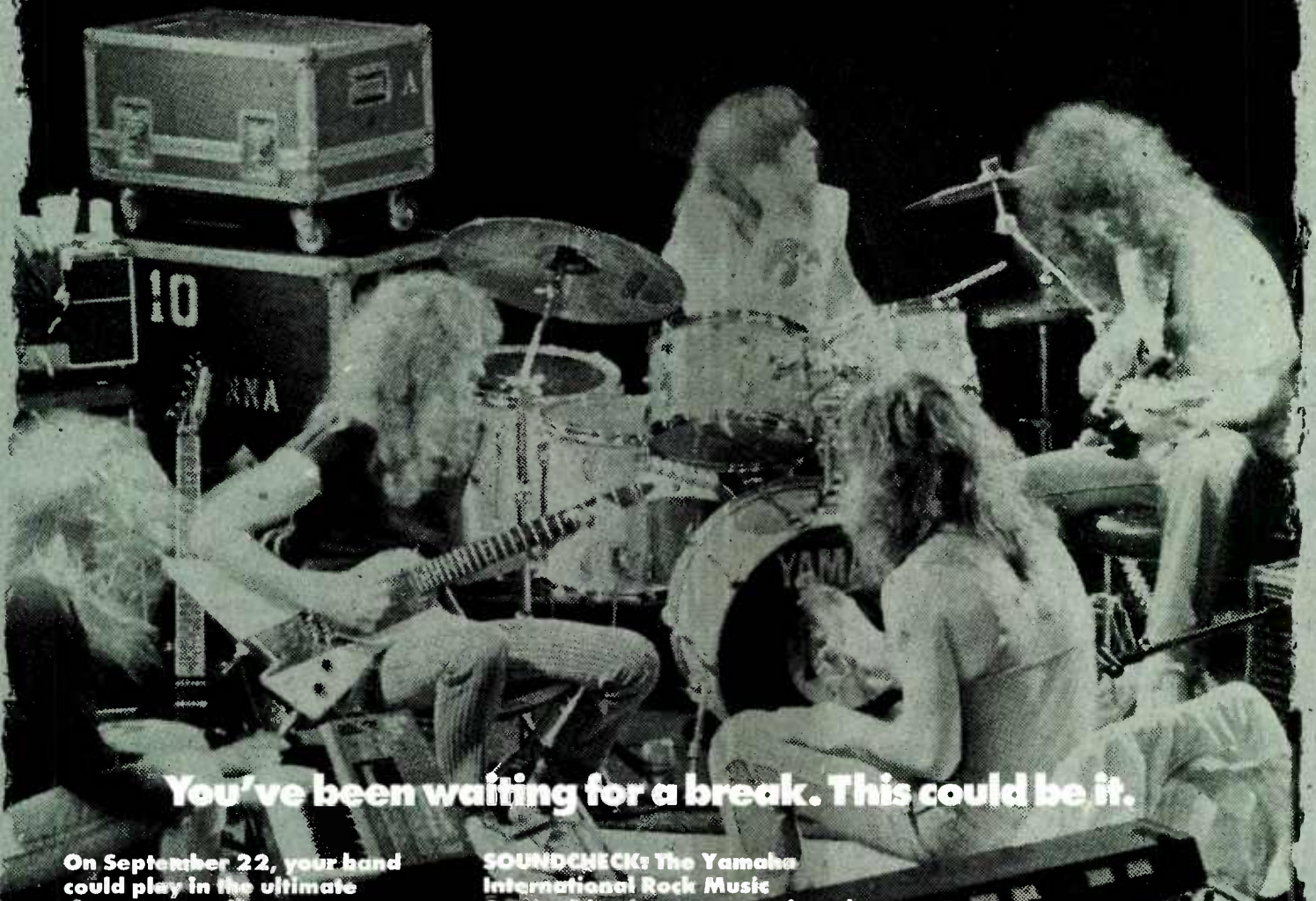
And for acoustic drummers, DW has developed some new dual-piezo triggers (bearing the model number DWPH-1) that attach to real drums at about \$49 a bang. The system works like this: One piezo is tuned to the frequency of the drum and the other is tuned to the frequency of a stick hitting a drum head. According to DW’s Don Lombardi, this latter frequency remains constant regardless of the drum’s size or tuning. So in order for a trigger to be sent, there has to be a stick hit, followed by resonance at the drum’s frequency. This helps get rid of double and false triggers.

All this requires power, of course. So a single-rack-space power supply, the DWT-1, completes the trigger system. A modular jack and single cord take care of both the power going to the trigger and the audio signal coming from the trigger. The power supply can handle 12 triggers and goes for \$190; it’s also needed for the new DW Bozzio Pedal, a real kick in the head.

And let’s not forget the ZMC-1 cymbal-miking system **Zildjian** developed in conjunction with **Barcus Berry** pickups. Now they’ve come up with a more affordable version called the ZMC-10. It’s got the same mikes, although only four of them come standard with the system, as opposed to six with the ZMC-1. You get essentially the same six-channel operation as the ZMC-1, but in a mono rather than a stereo configuration and without the ZMC-1’s effects loops and individual outputs. It’s a good deal for \$595 (as opposed to a grand for the ZMC-1), particularly since Zildjian has wisely opted to sacrifice a few features rather than audio quality. — Alan di Perna



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# RECORDS

## PULLING UP AMERICAN ROCK BY ITS ROOTS

JOHN COUGAR  
MELLENCAMP

*Big Daddy*  
(Mercury)

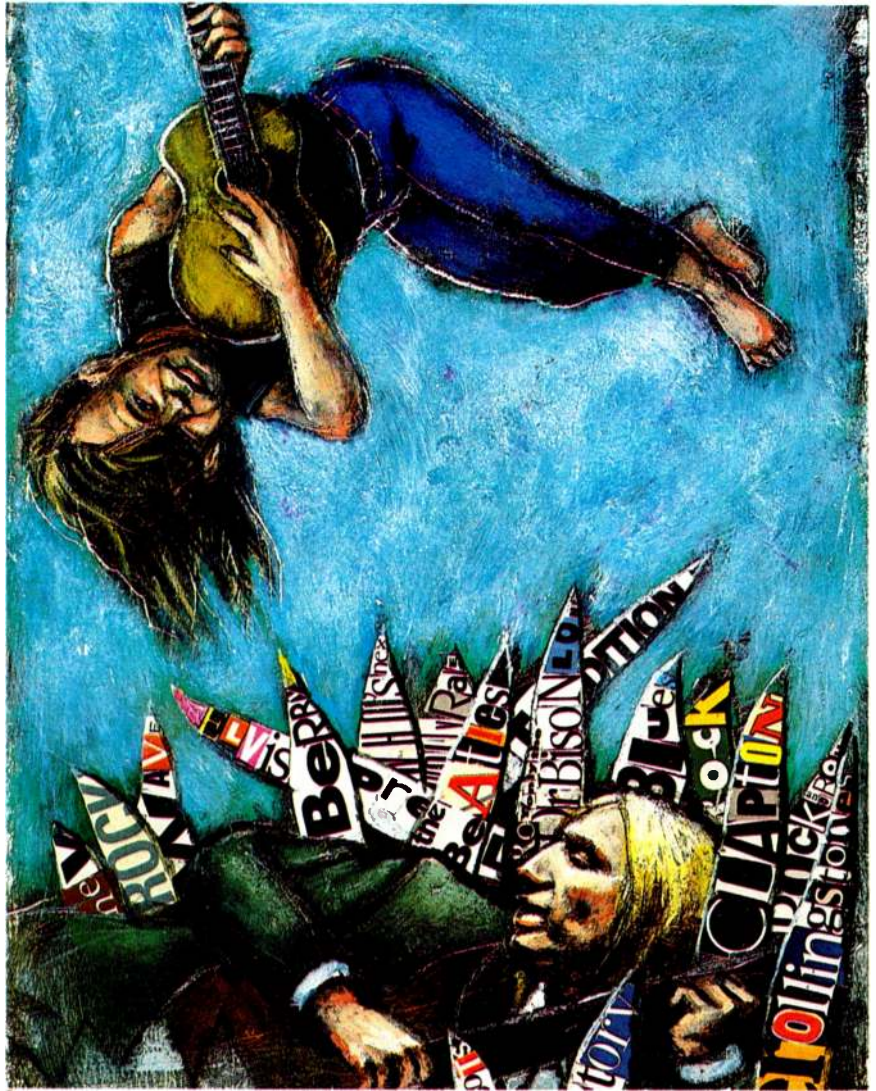
TOM PETTY

*Full Moon Fever*  
(MCA)

JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP and Tom Petty drove around in cars and went to high school in Midwestern and Southern U.S. towns during the mid-'60s, when drums and guitars anchored by a big beat were king. Neither has forgotten it for very long. Both a few years shy of 40, they don't sound tired or bored after more than a decade apiece of recording. Actually, they're in the prime of their careers, and their new albums show how and why.

On heroic records like *Scarecrow* and *The Lonesome Jubilee*, Mellencamp closed the books on the impatient, glittery popstar critics once loved to loathe. *Big Daddy* is the first of these recent albums made in Indiana without the help of co-producer Don Gehman. Given the music's elastic moorings of twilight-toned rhythms and guitars, plus occasional harmonica and fiddle, you might miss the percussive kick that Mellencamp and Gehman, on singles like "Small Town" and "Paper and Fire," built into influential, pared-down '80s rock. (They first lit onto this crackerjack blend for 1983's *Uh-Huh*.) Along the same lines, Mellencamp undersells the sense of humor that fueled his excellent version of Woody Guthrie's "Do Re Mi" on 1988's *Folkways: A Vision Shared* project.

But Mellencamp's days of truly screwing up are over. *Big Daddy*'s the work of a man who wonders in "Void in My Heart" if, despite all his successes, he'll still feel awful "when they carry me off to rest." If Mellencamp sings these songs with less Hoosier abandon than ever, it's simply because they don't lend themselves to that sort of fevered exhorta-



tion. Mellencamp now offers characters like the woman in "Martha Says" who's known enough patronizing men, or "Theo and Weird Henry," "little legends in a little town." Sometimes Mellencamp's writing is too broad, though "Country Gentleman," his vituperative attack on Ronald Reagan, also has the virtue of being accurate. When he says exactly what's on his mind, *Big Daddy* feels as compelling as anything he's done before. "Jackie Brown," for instance, is one of the most unblinking portrayals in rock of the tragedy of poverty.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers debuted in 1976, standing on traditional soil while flirting, sometimes confusingly, with the rootsier side of new wave. Before and after 1985's difficult but pivotal *Southern Accents*, on albums such

as *Hard Promises* and *Let Me Up (I've Had Enough)*, the Heartbreakers developed into one of the country's deepest and quickest bands, and Petty turned into an ace songwriter answerable only to himself. His course shifted last year, when he stepped into the grinning role of Traveling Wilbury as though he'd prepped for it from day one.

The way Petty sees it, rock 'n' roll is a music of tradition, just like jazz or classical, with the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and Roy Orbison and a few others its major precedents. It's still based as much on songs and voices that stick as on drums and guitars and keyboards; for Petty, it's all the same thing. That's why *Full Moon Fever*, his first solo album, is a top-notch demonstration of a certain rock 'n' roll. Heartbreaker Mike Camp-



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to the  
Traditional.*



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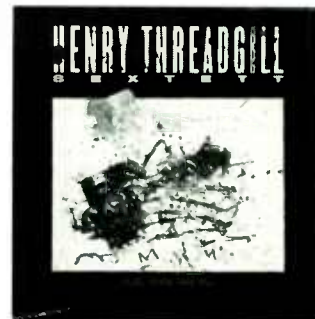
**MICHAEL SHRIEVE  
"STILETTO"**

Once known as the drummer for Santana, the rock/jazz percussionist has now turned his enormous talents to multi-format music. This showcase of contemporary instrumental wizardry features Mark Isham, Andy Summers, Terje Gewelt and David Torn.



**"FIELD OF DREAMS"**

The soundtrack to the hit motion picture starring Kevin Costner, Amy Madigan, James Earl Jones, Ray Liotta and Burt Lancaster. Featuring the music of James Horner, the two-time Academy Award winner ("An American Tail," "Aliens") and two-time Grammy winner.



**HENRY THREADGILL  
SEXTETT  
"RAG, BUSH AND ALL"**

"Perhaps the most important jazz composer of his generation," said *The New York Times* of this multi-instrumentalist whose two previous Novus albums helped him win 15 awards in *downbeat*'s prestigious Critics/Readers Polls.

NOVUS



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bell helped Jeff Lynne and Petty produce it; and Campbell also plays guitars and other key instruments, while Lynne, Jim Keltner, George Harrison and drummer Phil Jones round out most of the cast.

Like Mellencamp, Petty isn't a kid anymore, but that doesn't stop him from performing as a "bad boy" on "Free Falling," a brilliant song about guilt, responsibility, escape and southern California that he sings like his life depended on it. Throughout the album, Petty and Lynne and Campbell throw the shades of his voice—rocking or settled, fast-talking or earnest—higher up in the mix than when it commands the Heartbreakers' brew. This means that he's clearer than ever while casting his dry doubts about yuppiedom on songs like "Yer So Bad" and "The Apartment Song," while paying tribute to the Byrds on "Feel a Whole Lot Better," or returning to L.A. and the Less Than Zero generation that both baffles and concerns him ("It's so hard to be careful/So easy to be led") on "Zombie Zoo." On "A Face in the Crowd," a midtempo ballad, Petty devotes almost four minutes to meditating on the notion that before he met the woman in the song who stole his heart, he didn't know her. It's a story he fashions with arching blues-based guitar lines, effortlessly dramatic singing and a rhythmic undertow that builds as Petty wonders.

Like Bruce Springsteen, Sting or U2, John Mellencamp isn't afraid to get serious; when he has something to say, he says it, and he doesn't worry too much whether some listeners might want more subtlety or humor. Petty came closest to working in that distinctly '80s way on *Southern Accents*. But even there he wrote from the point of view of desperate or limited characters. It's why Mellencamp excelled on *Folkways* and why Petty made one dandy Wilbury. That difference—between exploring rock's roots and rock's rootlessness—is what currently distinguishes Petty from Mellencamp; it's also what makes them both matter. — James Hunter

### N. W. A.

*Straight Outta Compton*  
(Ruthless)

ALMOST EVERY RAPPER in hip-hop has dissed drugs, pushers and their accompanying lifestyle. But N.W.A.—a six-man crew from L.A. whose name is short for Niggers With Attitude—have put together a track called "Dopeman" which doesn't take

sides; it simply deals in verité. Replete with cornerside vignettes of manipulation and degradation, it comes off as a horrifying day in the life of one of the few ghetto people who make their own decisions. Now, N.W.A. are saying, you make yours.

The rest of *Straight Outta Compton* offers the same challenge. It's the most severe record that hip-hop has produced, a blaxploitation character sketch which gives race relations an Uzi up the ass. The LP has chalked up heavy numbers without a stitch of airplay. Radio can't touch it because N.W.A. live up to their name, jamming the record with antagonistic diatribes like "Fuck the Police" (which lays its retaliatory prom-



ise on the line) and "Gangsta Gangsta" (which touts "bitches and money" as the only things that matter).

If all this sounds like a threat, then you're on N.W.A.'s trip. It's politics first, music second. Reality, they posit, has been washed out of even the most brutal hip-hop discs. With the unadorned cutting of turntable jocks Dr. Dre and Yella, and the testy shooting and screwing raps of Eazy-E (the crew's kingpin), MC Ren and Ice Cube, their music puts the street in full effect.

Not the street that record companies sell to you, but the street no right-minded person wants to walk down. Compton, a tad west of Watts in the L.A. sprawl, suffers from the wrath of gangdom. Bullet sprays and needle marks are the norm. It's been said that N.W.A. overembellishes this ugliness, making their gang-mode raps reverberate like some kind of wack theater. If the band did perpetrate all they claim (and black-on-black crime is ceaseless here), they'd be down for sure, so we know they ain't as bad as boast.

But N.W.A.'s aural mugging renders that chide superfluous; hopefully it will work as an abject lesson. For all its coarseness—and it's especially ratty in the groove department—*Straight Outta Compton* lets outsiders in on a big part of

American culture run amok. As that other L.A. homeboy Mike Watt once cautioned, "Theater is the life of you."

— Jim Macnie



### R O X E T T E

*Look Sharp!*  
(EMI Manhattan)

FOR THOSE OF US who no longer drink too much, stay out all night or commit other sins of excess, junky pop music remains one of the few acceptable sources of cheap thrills. But with everyone from Metallica to Madonna straining to provide some sort of relevance these days, getting a quality trash fix can sometimes seem next to impossible. Happily, changing fashions haven't discouraged Sweden's Roxette from unleashing their devilishly catchy hit—"The Look"—and coming up with a whole album of light entertainment that's nearly as engaging. Ingeniously mindless, *Look Sharp!* will make a proud addition to any library of fine fluff, the perfect complement to those priceless Abba and Bananarama discs.

A duo of Marie Fredrikson (vocals) and Per Gessle (guitars, vocals, writing), Roxette cranks out one yummy confection after another, following the irresistible chorus of "The Look" with the toe-tapping pseudo-funk of "Dressed for Success," which in turn gives way to the three-hankie melodrama of "Cry," the sassy "Dangerous," and so forth. Although clattering drum machines and state-of-the-art keyboards mark *Look Sharp!* as contemporary product, these snappy ditties could have been packaged as Eurodisco in the '70s or girl-group pop in the '60s. Fredrikson attacks the material with the kind of brassy vigor that passes for true emotion, recalling such luminaries as Annie Lennox ("Dance Away") and Pat Benatar ("Listen to Your Heart") in her eagerness to deliver a good show. However derivative, she puts the songs across with an exhilarating bang.

Not surprisingly, Roxette's music





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tends to fall apart when examined closely. The playing (or programming) never transcends anonymity, and for all the sound and fury, the songs are eerily passionless. Which of course misses the point entirely. Rather than presuming to offer meaning or substance, *Look Sharp!* merely wants to join the modern media din. But it is kinda fun. — Jon Young

**RAVI SHANKAR**

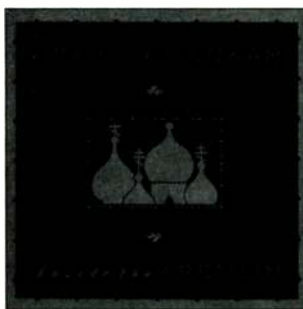
*Inside the Kremlin*  
(Private Music)

**TRILOK GURTU**

*Usfret*  
(CMP)

**T**HE ONION SPIRES you see on TV all the time, and on the cover of Shankar's album, that's not the Kremlin. That's St. Basil's Cathedral. The Krem-

lin's next door, and it looks kind of like the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, only smaller and with a wall around it, poorer parking facilities and probably



fewer palm trees and no dancing waters in its atrium. But don't let the Kremlin's modesty fool you: No less than Opryland, it is the capital of an empire, and for an old country picker like Ravi Shankar

to pluck his sitar in its precincts and mingle tones toe-to-toe with a Roosky orchestra, choir and folk ensemble is no small matter.

It is a large matter, with definite White Elephant overtones, but it's good to listen to anyway: Shankar's own ensemble is 20 musicians strong so that it's not overwhelmed, the orchestra plays exactly but without the Indian equivalent of swing, and one of the high points involves Gypsy violin. Shankar, master musician, performs with his usual virtuosity and *brio*, and the whole enormous assemblage is recorded about as well as you could wish. As a celebration of transcultural idealism it is sentimentally stirring in the Russian manner, and "Shanti Mantra," intoned as a prayer for peace, is especially beautiful, memorable and melodic.

*Kirk Whalum  
delivers  
"The Promise."*

The new album with superb sax, special guest stars and music that ranges from R&B rhythms to the sounds of Brazil. Featuring "I Receive Your Love" and "The Promise" produced by Jerry Peters, plus six songs produced by Bob James.

It's the kind of music that made Kirk's last album, "And You Know That!" No. 1 for six straight weeks!

**On Columbia Cassettes, Compact Discs and Records.**

Produced by Bob James and Jerry Peters. Management: Peter Paul "Columbia," ♡ are trademarks of CBS Inc. © 1989 CBS Records Inc.



Trilok Gurtu's album, a synthed, spliced, electrified dream of Orient Wonder, strikes me as a more exciting piece of work. Gurtu's brilliant adaptation of trap-set drumming powers the music and adds a backbeat with little loss of polymetric intricacy. L. Shankar keens and soars, Don Cherry adds silvery splinters of chromatic chaos, and notebending voices wing in like prayers from the other world. This is adventurous, mildly heretical music-making, too rhythmic and sexy for new age, and it deserves more listeners than it is likely to find. Wanna be one? – **Rafi Zabor**



**FRITZ KREISLER**

*Mozart and Bach Concertos*  
(Pearl)  
*In Immortal Performances*  
(RCA Red Seal)

**JASCHA HEIFETZ**

*Showpieces: Double Concertos; Beethoven Violin Sonatas 1, 2, 3, 4; 5, 6, 7; 8, 9, 10*  
*Bach: Sonatas and Partitas*  
(RCA Red Seal)

**EUGENE FODOR**

*Romancing the Violin*  
(Newport Classic)  
*John Corigliano: Sonata for Violin and Piano; Nicolas Flagello: Declamation/ Sonata for Violin and Piano*  
(Laurel)

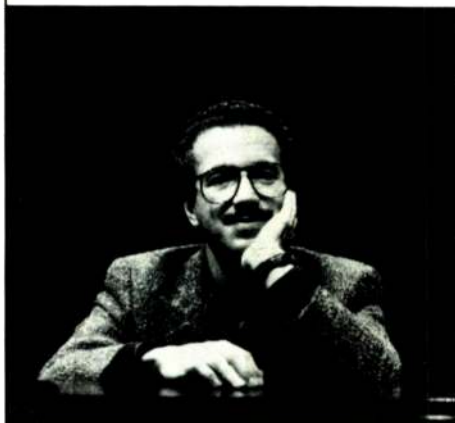
**A**S A YOUNG GIRL, my wife dropped to her knees upon hearing Fritz Kreisler, because she couldn't imagine anything so beautiful. And as a boy, in those years before I encountered Charlie Parker's American dream, nothing used to mesmerize me quite like Jascha Heifetz slicing and dicing his way through the showpiece cadenzas of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto on RCA Red Seal.

To characterize these legendary players for jazz listeners, you might say that Kreisler played Johnny Hodges to Heifetz's Bird. The Pearl set comprises Kreisler's earliest recordings (back to 1904!), and it's remarkable how clearly his sweet singing tone cuts through on these prehistoric works. The RCA

**Keith Jarrett**



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**JON CHRISTENSEN**

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Kreisler retrospective (1914–1928) is notable for his gypsy-like responses to the great Irish tenor John McCormack, and the lyric repose of his masterful sonata performances with pianist/composer Sergei Rachmaninoff.

Heifetz dominated his era as no twentieth-century violinist has, with a glassy, expressive tone and an unprecedented level of rhythmic power and dynamic control. So overwhelming were his technical gifts that the critical cognoscenti branded him a cold, aesthetically vapid technocrat. Don't believe the hype—people got to say something, I guess. While his crowd-pleasing virtuos-

ity certainly animates *Showpieces* (give him a cadenza and he's gone), it never obscures his deep feeling for Beethoven or the Brahms on the double concertos (with cellist Piatig Orsky) on these essential digital remasterings. And though his unaccompanied Bach performances are the ugly duckling of this release, they're still my favorites. They don't rival the celebrated interpretations of Szigeti and Menuhin (he's strangely detached on the Sonatas), but his unaccompanied Partitas (especially the Chaconne) are hardly the work of an unfeeling automaton.

Among the younger generation of

violinists, few can rival Eugene Fodor for tonal grace, expressive power or sheer fluency. In a sense he's achieved the perfect concord between Kreisler's singing lyricism and Heifetz's Olympian locomotion. Descended from a great musical family, his strong sense of tradition never obscures a sure feeling for twentieth-century music. On his digital showcase *Romancing the Violin*, he does honor to the popular recording traditions of Kreisler and Heifetz, but it is on his Laurel recording with pianist Arlene Portnoy that Fodor augments his stature as a major violinist. Where some violinists favor a bright, keening sound, Fodor's tone is dark and sensual, and on Corigliano's Sonata his intense rhythmic exuberance and sure feel for vocalized harmonics impart a deep lyric ardor and dancing buoyancy to these romantic modernist designs. (Laurel Records, 2451 Nicholas Canyon, Los Angeles, CA 94006.) – Chip Stern

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**KRONOS QUARTET**

*Winter Was Hard*  
(Nonesuch)

**TURTLE ISLAND  
STRING QUARTET**

*Metropolis*  
(Windham Hill)

WITH THE CLASSICAL tradition seeming less like a cultural force than a vast repository of musical icons, the string quartet seems more than ever the realm of the performer. Certainly that's true of the big-name mainstream groups—Beethoven by Guarneri, Brahms by the Cleveland—the classical-music equivalent of designer jeans. Even in new music circles the performer reigns supreme. It's the Kronos Quartet, not composers Aulis Sallinen or Arvo Part or Alfred Schnittke, who are the draw on *Winter Was Hard*, and its audience prizes the group as much for its taste-making acumen as musical ability.

That said, it ought to be noted that the only performer who seems absolutely



essential to any of the works offered on the Kronos' *Winter Was Hard* is record-manipulator Christian Marclay, who anchors John Zorn's gimmicky-clever "Forbidden Fruit" (how many turntable-players are there who can follow a score?). Otherwise, the album is a triumph of ensemble playing above all. The musical choices are characteristically eclectic, ranging from the angular sweetness of Samuel Barber's "Adagio" to the cerebral asceticism of Anton von Webern's "Six Bagatelles." As usual, the little-known delicacies prove the most delicious: Sallinen's "Winter Is Hard" makes an appropriate dedication, opening the album with elegiac majesty, and the Kronos' realization of Part's "Fratres" is stunning in its lean beauty. But the real treat has to be Astor Piazzolla's "Four for Tango," a bracingly romantic work that evokes the immediateness of improvisation while maintaining the considered orderliness of composition. It alone would make the album worth owning.

Improvisation, particularly in the jazz scene, is still essentially a stranger to string quartet playing. Maintaining the necessary sense of spontaneity and swing is something too few groups have

managed over the years. That the Turtle Island String Quartet has so far stayed in the plus column through both its albums says as much about the group's determination as its inventiveness. Turtle Island's approach depends as much on arrangers as soloists, meaning that Darol Anger's wonderfully swinging solo on "Sidewinder" would not have amounted to much without Irene Sazer's ability to sketch out an accompaniment (and thank the Lord for Mark Summer, a cellist absolutely at home with a walking bass line). Though *Metropolis* sometimes seems pretty when it ought to be compelling, it is on the whole a success, suggesting that there may be more life than suspected in the ancient and honorable art of the string quartet.

— J.D. Considine

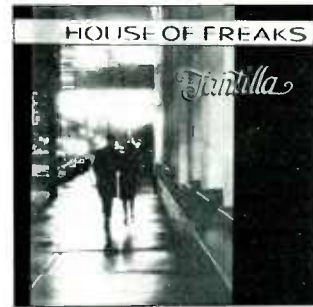
## HOUSE OF FREAKS

*Tantilla*  
(Rhino)

**T**HIS POST NEW-WAVE duo from Virginia is being hailed as the latest and hippest thinking man's rock band but it's anybody's guess why: The Freaks make deeply conventional music,

and the most noteworthy thing about these two guys is the fact that they manage to make as much noise as a full band of boring musicians.

Formed in 1986, the Freaks relocated to L.A. two years ago and released a



debut LP that garnered critical raves. This follow-up will no doubt have critics cheering as well, seeing as how they haven't changed their recipe a whit. Combining jangling, Byrdsian guitar, galvanizing rhythms and Bryan Harvey's "Onward into the valley of death, men!" vocals (Harvey sings in the extravagantly portentous style perfected by Bono), *Tantilla* makes an appeal to the responsible adult that lurks within many

CONTINUED ON PAGE 121

# RYKO/AFRICA



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### VARIOUS ARTISTS

*The Best of Jazz in Digital Stereo*  
(BBC CD)

DISTRIBUTED BY MOBILE FIDELITY, THESE recent additions to the Robert Parker BBC Collection illustrate the pros and cons of this visionary audio engineer's approach to tweaking 78 rpm records. On some tracks, the sensation of space, depth and detail in Parker's "digital stereo" interpretations is scary—exceptionally quiet as well. On other cuts, like the Armstrong/Hines duet "Weather Bird," while the image is indeed enhanced, the piano seems murky compared to my old Columbia LP. Generally I like his approach, and this sampler will give you an hour's worth of Armstrong, Morton, Ellington, Lang, Venuti and Fats Waller for your CD pleasure.

### CHARLES MINGUS

*The Young Rebel* (Swingtime)

ALRIGHT, SO FIRST THERE WAS A DUKE Ellington, then a Count Basie, and now, for the uninitiated, here's a collection of early rarities by the young Baron Mingus & His Symphonic Airs (1949), plus a 1946 octet (with a Dukish "This Subdues My Passion" featuring Lucky Thompson) and a 1952 quintet (with Lee Konitz on the elliptical "Precognition"). This curious little Milano import (a no-royalty special, unless I miss my guess) compiles a side of the Baron's work as a composer/leader, and another as a sideman with the likes of Oscar Pettiford ("Cello Again") and Earl Hines. If you can overlook some rather nondescript vocals, the roots of the Mingus style are already well in place.

### JOE SAMPLE

*Spellbound* (Warner Bros.)

I GUESS I'M OUT OF STEP, BECAUSE THIS Tommy LiPuma pop-jazz production is a lock to top the *Billboard* and *VH-1*

charts. But for me, despite the cheery bump of Omar Hakim and Marcus Miller, and the pianist's ingratiating lyricism, nada. When I reach for some Joe Sample, it's to grab a snort of *Southern Comfort*, and that, my friends, is long ago and far away. So as a public service, I can tell you that if you like wine-spritzer jazz, a little dab'll do ya, but Lord forgive me, every time I hear vocalist Michael Franks, I dream of AK-47s.

### JACK BRUCE

*Things We Like* (Polydor)

THIS OBSCURE 1968 SESSION HAS LONG BEEN a favorite among the bassist's progressive fans, featuring his very credible Mingus-inflected acoustic bass, good writing and some of guitarist John McLaughlin's most vital pre-*Extrapolation* improvising—a modern jazz style he's long since abandoned. (Check out his Dolphyesque turns of phrase on "Hckhh Blues" and his ruminative splendor on "Ballad for Arthur.") Reedman Dick Heckstall-Smith does himself proud in his derivative manner of a Sonny Rollins, while the excellent new mix restores the original dynamics. That's a mixed blessing, because while Jon Hiseman's double-bass figurations are fervent and colorful, they're also a mite busy.

PITHTAKES: BUELL NEIDLINGER'S *String Jazz—Locomotive* (Soul Note). Cecil Taylor's original bassist returns with a joyous celebration of Monk and Ellington that is equal parts bluegrass and swing, thanks to the mandolin of John Kurnick, the violin of Brenton Banks and the tenor of Marty Krystal. . . Jack Walrath—*Neohippus* (Blue Note). While there might be more overwhelming trumpet stylists, there are few more compelling composers in a jazz idiom than this canny veteran of the last Mingus Quintet. The operative word on *Neohippus* is hard; hard

bop, hard blues, hard charts, full of intriguing textural details and shifting harmonies, most of it swinging and all of it fun. . . Ron Carter—*All Alone* (Emarcy). Dog yummys for your subwoofer from one of the bass' most prodigious soloists. . . Fletcher Henderson—*Swing 1929–1937* (BBC CD). A Rosetta stone of big-band devices and classic soloists from the man who helped make it possible. . . Tom Harrell—*Stories* (Contemporary). Graceful, airborne flugelhorn from an underrated master. . . Mulgrew Miller—*The Countdown* (Landmark). Funky, swinging and tasteful, pianist Miller is beginning to transcend his influences, and in the company of sometime-boss Tony Williams, bassist Ron Carter and tenor giant Joe Henderson, he has fashioned his most cogent set of modern mainstream playing to date. . . Terri Lyne Carrington—*Real Life Story* (Verve/Forecast). I'm of two minds here. There's some good driving fusion in an Afro-Cuban/R&B vein and some reasonably innocuous song structures—plus a few snippets of the drummer unbound—but for this moldy fig a little straight-ahead playing would have presented a more fulsome picture of this talented drummer. Stay tuned. . . Sonny Rollins—*A Night at the Village Vanguard, Vols. 1 & 2* (Blue Note). Fans of this classic 1957 trio session should take note of this CD-only configuration, with two hours of new material and alternates, some superb, some scruffy. One quibble—scattering the original masters over two volumes, dissipating the original's power and forcing you to buy it all. . . Miles Davis—*Ascenseur pour l'Échafaud* (Fontana). Miles files, from a French soundtrack with French tenorist Barney Wilen and expatriate Kenny Clarke. Serene. . . Chet Baker—*Chet Baker in Paris, Vols. 1 & 2* (Emarcy). Lyrical, introspective cool jazz from the James Dean of the trumpet. . .

BY CHIP STERN



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**JAMES BROWN***Roots of a Revolution* (Polydor CD)

IF ONLY FOR "I'VE GOT MONEY," WHOSE churning drums, monolithic groove and impassioned vocals clearly sketch out the shape of hits to come three years before "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," this would be an indispensable collection. But *Roots of a Revolution* is full of such revelations. Rather than waste time with the hits (you mean you *don't* already own "I Feel Good"?), it concentrates on the rest of Brown's output, tracing his development from 1956–64 through 40 little-known but greatly enjoyable gems. As usual, Cliff White's notes are exhaustively informative, plus there's the bonus of studio dialogue and eight songs unavailable on the imported vinyl version. What more incentive could you need?

**ROACHFORD***Roachford* (Epic)

WHAT MAKES THIS EXCITING ISN'T THAT Andrew Roachford plays his genuine soul-man singing against the rest of Roachford's hard-rock crunch, but that he and his band refuse to recognize the imagined boundaries between rock and soul. That explains the extra edge to the power-pop of "Cuddly Toy (Feel for Me)," the subtle menace beneath the funk of "Nobody but You," and why Roachford is one band to watch.

**JODY WATLEY***Larger Than Life* (MCA)

FOR A ONE-MAN BAND, PRODUCER ANDRE Cymone makes a big noise and a versatile one at that, generating grooves that ape everyone from Teddy Riley to L.A. & Babyface. Still, Cymone doesn't get top billing here, and justifiably; no matter how much Watley feeds off the rhythm, she always adds something more, exploiting her vocal limitations with a finesse that recalls Diana Ross in her prime.

**THE BUCK PETS***The Buck Pets* (Island)

ANYONE WONDERING JUST HOW AESTHETICALLY bankrupt the punk/metal under-

ground has become need look no further than the Buck Pets. Imagine Motorhead hung over and playing at half-speed, and you'll have an idea of the Pets' instrumental attack; think of locker-room graffiti as if written for a high-school literary mag, and you've got lyrics. Now try to envision someone dumb enough to think such things cool, and that's the target audience.

**SIDEWINDERS***Witchdoctor* (RCA/Mammoth)

DESPITE THE COWPUNK NAME, THE SIDEWINDERS sound like some unholy cross between R.E.M. and Hüsker Dü—dark, drony and loud as hell. That's not to say the band is without a strong pop sensibility; the title tune is as catchy as it is haunting, and they do a killer cover of "Solitary Man" to boot. But the band's command of atmosphere and dynamic tension is sure to put a spell on you.

**CATERWAUL***Pin & Web* (IRS)

BETWEEN BETSY MARTIN'S PHLEGMATIC wail and the gloomy guitar-and-bass drone, Caterwaul could be mistaken for any number of second-hand Siouxsies. But the band's writing is something else; economical and evocative, it's a perfect mix between mood and melody, from the metallic shudder of "Throw Like Thunder" to the giddy "Dizzy Delirium."

**THE JAMS, A.K.A. THE TIMELORDS***History of the Jams* (TVT)**VARIOUS ARTISTS***Miami Bass Wars* (Pandisc)

NEVER MIND WHETHER SAMPLING IS CREATIVITY or theft; are sampling-based records any good? The Jams are a British art-is-theft duo whose obsessively-crafted aural collages are more dazzling than listenable; only the Gary Glitterish "Doctoring the Tardis" sounds like an actual song. Not that the DJs behind the Miami bass sound are master tunesmiths either, but at least they try. Though the heart of Miami bass is the rumbling thump of an 808 (or 909), its smarts depend on deft quotes and clever asides, creating a world where "It Takes Two"

and the "Munsters" theme are aesthetic equals, and proud of it.

**STRAY CATS***Blast Off* (EMI)

AFTER THREE ALBUMS, THESE GUYS ALREADY sound as cynical as rockabilly stars twice their age. Talk about authenticity!

**JULIAN LENNON***Mr. Jordan* (Atlantic)

DON'T KNOW WHERE THE BOWIE VOICE came from—too many cigarettes, or too many comparisons to dad?—but apart from that, *Mr. Jordan* is an impressive step forward for Mr. Lennon. Not only is the writing sharper and the playing looser, but Lennon finally seems to be having some fun with the job—proof that if talent doesn't always out, genes will.

**HUGH MARSH***Shaking the Pumpkin*

(Soundwings/Duke Street)

DOES THE WORLD NEED A JAZZ-FUSION cover of "Purple Haze," much less one featuring electric violin and Robert Palmer? Well, yeah—in this case it does, partly because Marsh and company are smart enough to avoid the obvious clichés, but mostly because they always remember that the song, not the solo, comes first. Bonus social consciousness points for "Rules Are Made to Be Broken," a chillingly deadpan account of the Nazis' war against jazz.

**BOB MOULD***Workbook* (Virgin)

THOUGH THE TITLE MAKES THESE TUNES seem more like sketches than actual songs, the sound suggests otherwise. Without the Hüskers behind him, Mould no longer feels compelled to undercut his melodicism with a sobering slap of noise, but that hasn't necessarily mellowed him. "Brasilia Crossed with Trenton" may itself be crossed with a quiet beauty, but acoustic guitars and restrained tempi don't always guarantee a kinder, gentler song, as the likes of "Heartbreak a Stranger" or "Poison Years" make plain. Is it too early to ask for more?

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

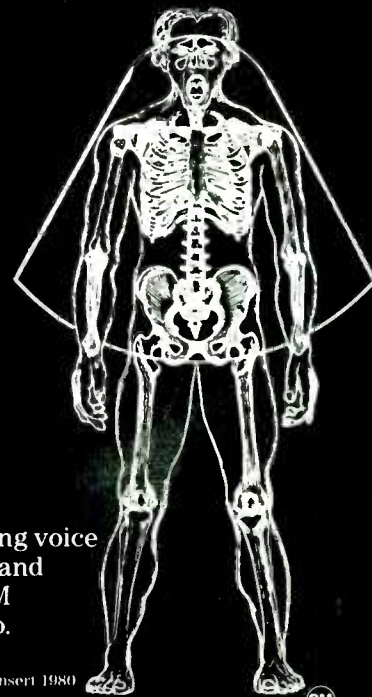


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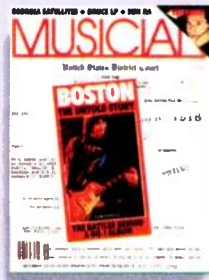




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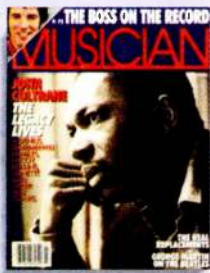
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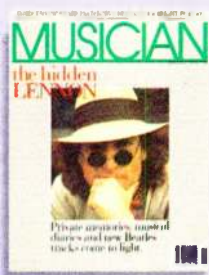
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the *Last Temptation* album, and missed the movie's release altogether, to play for Amnesty again. He has just returned from a trip to Russia for Greenpeace. Gabriel's propensity for charity is surely praiseworthy, but must be giving his accountants nightmares. "Yeah, well, you can end up in a financial hole a lot easier than anticipated, that's for sure," Gabriel laughs. "But as critics are keen to point out, there is promotional value to all that charity stuff—benefit stuff I much prefer to call it. And I've had some of the most satisfying experiences of my life doing those things. Playing Central America, South America, India, Africa on that last tour was something that's going to stay with me until I die. It's just very powerful, emotional experiences. Not just because of the human-rights message and the presence of a lot of people going through all these horrendous stories around us. But in terms of musical relationships, too. These people were so excited because it was like someone coming to them, this group of people saying, 'You're important enough for us to play for.' And we were very moved by it.

"But right now I'm saying no to all sorts of benefit work that isn't in some way a continuation of stuff I'm already involved with. People are beginning to get bored with them now, and there's some backlash—'benefit whores and worthy bores.'"

Now that he's out in the world more regularly, have his first beliefs about ethnic music been confirmed or punctured? "Well, the classic learning curve with world music is you start off thinking anything strange is good. And then you realize in every field there's really good and bad, and you begin to hear how *those* musicians hear it. One of the first things of African music I'd heard back in '76 came over a Dutch radio station, and it became something I'd focused in on and explored. Then I heard the same thing five years ago and I thought, 'Why on earth would I like *that*?' So now I've heard a whole lot more."

In the past, Gabriel would describe himself as an armchair collector, never leaving his Bath home to find these exotic pieces of music. And now? "What's wonderful is with WOMAD across the yard and us doing all these world-music sessions in the studio, we have all kinds of musicians coming through here and we have some fantastic nights in my upstairs studio. I had a band in here the other night, 14 musicians and three dancers, and it was just a fantastic atmosphere. We get that happening two or three times a month, and it'll be a lot

more when the festival season is on.

"So I sort of created a situation where I'm going out into the world a lot more," Gabriel smiles, "but the world is also coming to my armchair a lot more." ▽

## RECORDS from page 113

rock fans. Built for the most part around belabored metaphors lamenting man's inhumanity to man, the record pats the listener on the back for being able to distinguish right from wrong.

Much has been made of the Freaks' Southern roots (they claim to have been inspired by early blues), but there's nothing discernibly Southern about their music. Mainstream protest tunes in the tradition of such ghastly bands as the Call and the Alarm, this music hails from the heartland of America where everybody's got a hungry heart and is born to run. Tailor-made for MTV, the Freaks' sound can be dismissed as merely annoying, but their heavy-handed lyrics are downright objectionable. With most of their songs structured as prophecy/fables evocative of Dylan's "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall," the Freaks' words, which are frequently rather violent, strive for biblical grandiosity. It just doesn't wash. — **Kristine McKenna**

## MINGUS from page 70

recited it. I left before he conducted it. I saw all these evil faces. His girlfriend in France told me he said he would love to get a small band; he'd love to go with me and Max because those evil guys Russell Procope and Cootie are turning their backs on him. I've seen them—leanin' like this, not even lookin' at Duke, or they turn their chairs to the side, put their backs to him. He's such a sweet, nice man. He just takes all that and won't fire them.



### ON BEING A LEADER

I was supposed to be a leader. I just had so many fights with people that nobody would hire me because I was a troublemaker. I really wasn't, I just refused to be treated the way the black cats were. I saw Irving Levy, Morris Levy's brother, boot guys downstairs: "Get down the stairs, nigger," you know? Well, I wouldn't take that shit. I didn't care if they were gangsters or not. In those days anybody could get a gun. Part of it was that. And then, unless I was playin' with Bird, I didn't like none of the beboppers—the guys who copied Bird's next solo before he went to play. I

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couldn't stand that. So out of necessity I got my own record company, then I got my own band. First place we worked was Cafe Bohemia. Coltrane came and played with us one night. He didn't invent that one-chord stuff. He got that from Miles. Miles got it from me. Eric Dolphy's the one brought Coltrane by the club, and told him I'd been doin' that for 20 years. This was shortly before he [Dolphy] died. I was at the Showplace. Coltrane said, "Where do we go next? Where do we go from here?" He found a style he thought was going to make him rich and it did and he stuck to that one style. To me, there is no new music. If you look at a fundamentals book, it can show you different tempos, different rhythms, different meters, different chord changes, different music with no chords. If you study music, you're able to do anything. I always tried to have a band that could play a waltz—I don't mean like dixieland and ragtime—but would use elements of dixieland and ragtime, like two and three instruments improvising at the same time, so the idea came from that, everyone playing solos at the same time without playing dixie. That was the difference in my music. I had more variety. When every piece sounds just like the last one, that's no fun.



#### ON ADVISING COLTRANE

I wish I knew what I said, man, 'cause I know it wasn't right. He was into his fasting thing and all that. I should have explained it to him. Like if you were going to write music for a film score, and you were going to use pedal point on that one and then you get another movie, and use pedal point on that one, the people won't hire you no more, 'cause "he wore that thing out, man."

I couldn't dig my own music. That's why I went back to playin' straight rhythm bass, 'cause they ruined those bass figures. The rock guys are doin' it now. Everybody's playing figured bass lines. When I played a figured bass line on Teddy Charles, he thought I was crazy. He said, "Why don't you play straight time, man, and swing?" I said, "Well, the drummer's already playin' time, man. I don't have to play the same thing that the drummer's playing." But now I do—out of not wanting to copy myself. And a lot of guys are starting to do that again now. They're startin' to play regular tunes. George Coleman, one of the greatest musicians livin'—but not *the* greatest—the way he writes, all that, it's a good sign that music's comin' back 'cause it's in a rut. Guys get up on the bandstand and say, "You start to play and I'll come in and then somebody else'll come in"—don't even know what key you're in, don't know what you're playin'. Even the people who don't know music know that's *not* music.

The audience knows folk music when they hear it. It has to have some form, to come from some historical music created by a people. That was originally what they called jazz. Although I do know the mass of black people grew up with what they called "black" and "white" records. Then they called it "rhythm and blues"—they didn't call it rock 'n' roll, Elvis Presley came up with that. Took rhythm and blues, added another beat to it and called it rock and made billions of dollars. And this government is responsible for it, too, man. They do that to keep people in ruts. They don't want Americans to hear music, 'cause it makes them start to think. If you listen to music, you can't be jackin' off, playin' with a girl or gettin' high. You have to

concentrate on the music to say you heard it fully. Just because you can jump and dance don't mean you listen to the music.



#### ON IMPROVISED MUSIC

It has something to do with playing with your heart. You're not playing from a system. I'm not talking about guys who play with an electronic system or a funny kind of music, but if you wrote something from your heart, you expect people to respect you enough to listen for at least an hour or they shouldn't come to the club. They can always leave if they don't like it. They don't have to disturb the other people. I do it differently. I talk to people on the mike if they're bad. They're really good lately. I haven't had any trouble since Dannie's back in the band.

It's hard to talk about music. I think some music is the description of the sicknesses of a society. Some music—like in restaurants and on elevators—that music is destructive. If they had good music playing for people, it would be a happy society on the streets. I feel like my music—I have a new record coming out—maybe this time they'll hear it. I know what I can say about the music. I started pedal point in a period when everybody was playing bebop. The difference is I don't only do that. I still like to play a song with bar phrases, 'cause I enjoy all kinds of music. I enjoy Indian music probably as much as I do Charlie Parker. I like Beethoven string quartets. I'm writing a string quartet: two violins and two cellos. I like that sound better than I do the viola 'cause the cellos play high enough. Everything's possible. "Sue's Changes" was meant to be like that. And the ritards and the accelerandos, that's all classical music.



#### ON A CAREER IN MUSIC

I went to take the test to get a job in the post office. That's what my father wanted me to do. I went. But I never took the test. I told everybody, "I'd rather shine shoes first." That's something I could get with—my own business. I told my father I took the test and failed. He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going to be a musician." He said, "Well, there's not much work in music, Charles. You got to be exceptional." He sent me out to Reinschagen, this bass teacher. I'd gone to Red Callender already. Red was a very good fundamental teacher, but this bass teacher covered the thumb position very high, high notes and all that. I used to play much higher when I was younger than I do now. But I'm gonna have to start playing it again. These young kids are playin' all over the bass. Yeah.



#### ON WEIRD

I don't like to call the music I play "jazz"—that's a white man's word. I was talking to Duke Ellington one time about it and Duke said when *downbeat* magazine asked him what his music should be called, he said, "Call it Negro music." So I said to him, "Let's you and me and Clark Terry make an avant-garde record. Let's go way back and play some weird music, Duke." He said, "Mingus, let's not go back that far." ■



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