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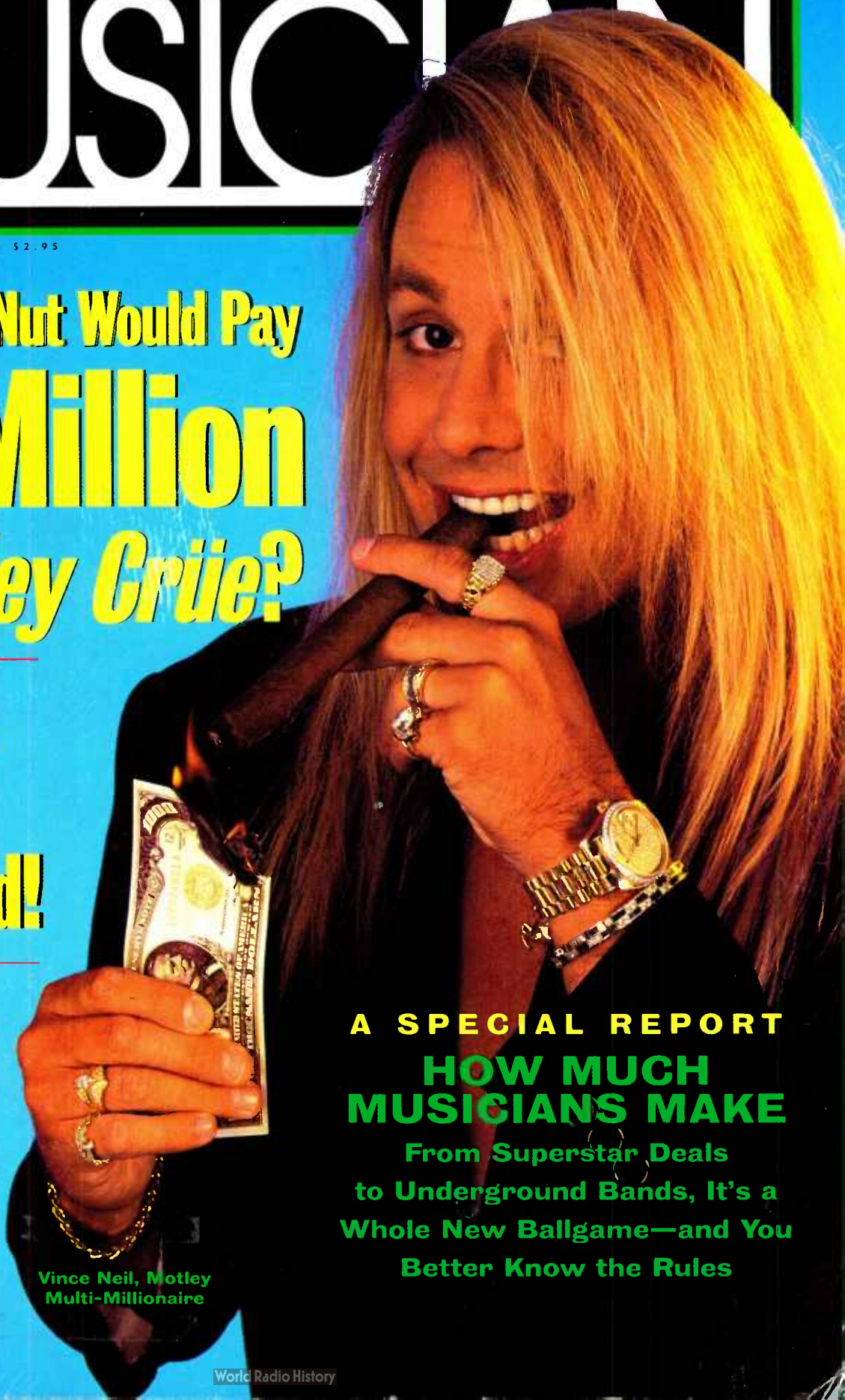

Vince Neil, Motley Multi-Millionaire

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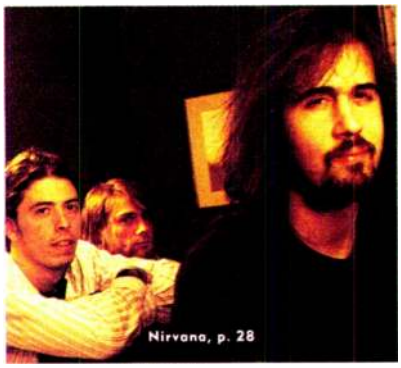
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Elektra has just paid Mötley Crüe $25 million. How do Vince Neil and Nikki Sixx feel about that? How the hell would you feel? *It's great!* By Mark Rowland

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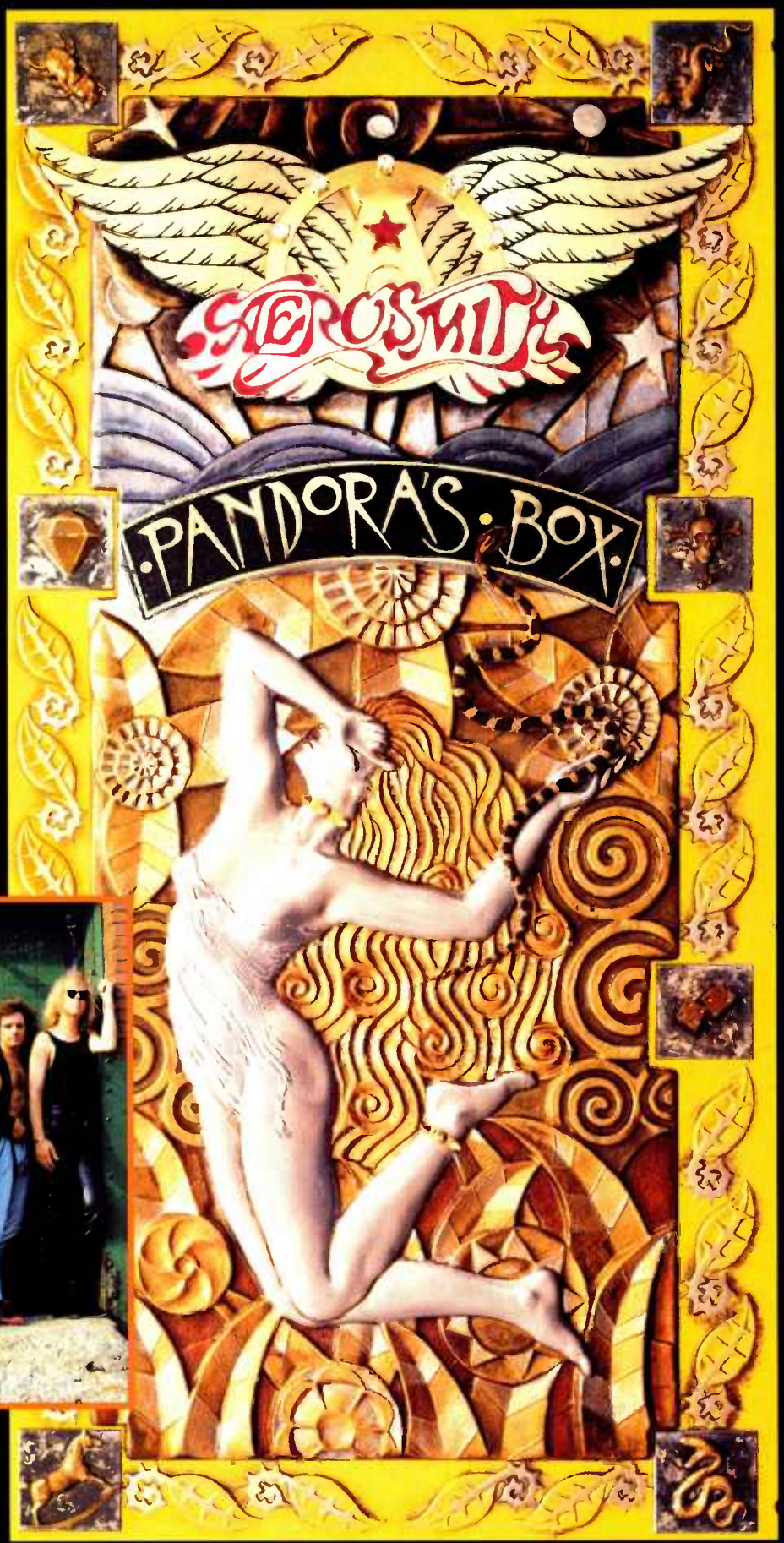
Cover: Vince Neil photographed by Karen Miller, Venice, California, November 1991. **This page** (from left): Merlyn Rosenberg, Koren Miller, Deborah Samuel.

GO AHEAD... OPEN IT



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FIND OUT WHAT REALLY LURKS INSIDE

PANDORA'S BOX
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James Taylor

Your first album—James Taylor, *on Apple—is about to come out on CD. More than the other Apple artists, you escaped the shadow of the Beatles.*

I left the label after one album and just continued with my own thing and working with other people. Also, the next few albums were much more successful and I think are the records people associate with me. So it wasn't as though I was always trying to make it back up to that mark or something.

In your early days you opened for Led Zeppelin and were booed off.

It used to happen frequently. I opened for the Who in Cleveland, me and a guitar and a chair, and it was the same kind of experience. I was an opening act and I wasn't the draw, and that goes with the territory. It was about the time *Sweet Baby James* was coming out, actually.

How old is your nephew "Sweet Baby James"?

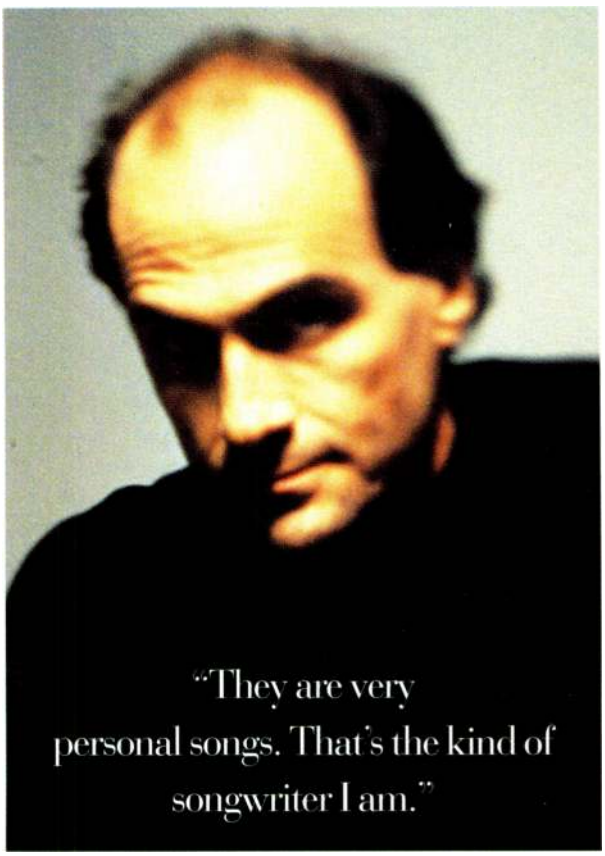
James is 23. He lives on Martha's Vineyard island where he works, but James is somewhat itinerant. He's done some work with an educational company down here in New York and some on the West Coast too. He is unfixed at this point, but very much himself and a great guy.

How has he felt about being the subject of a famous lullaby?

I don't know what it's been like for him, I haven't really discussed it with him recently. For a while there he wanted to change his name to Jack, but he's gone back to James. I don't know how he feels about it. I might give him a call and ask him.

Onstage lately you seem unafraid to get downright goofy, dancing around. Do you feel a lot more confident now than you used to?

Well, some nights yes, some nights no. I've heard some tapes of early shows that were extremely silly, too, just out there. Part of that is just exhaustion and goofing off at the moment without thinking about what the national cultural perception of you is. There comes a period that accompanies a major success and a lot of exposure and attention where you sort of constrict. You worry about how it's being perceived and try to control it.



"They are very personal songs. That's the kind of songwriter I am."

Then after a while you say, "What the hell." It loosens up again at a certain point.

You're known for introspective songs, but lately you've been writing in character. On New Moon Shine *you take the perspective of a mole in "Down in the Hole" and a man defrosted after 100 years in "Frozen Man."*

You run out of autobiographical things after a while. It gets pretty tiresome. Your interest starts to drift. But both of those songs are sort of autobiographical; they seem to be about very specific characters, but they are very personal songs. That's the kind of songwriter I am.

In "Slap Leather" and "Native Son" you seem uncharacteristically political.

Yeah, it's unusual for me to sing something that's that in-the-world. Usually my stuff is more private or internal. My politics have generally been liberal Democratic with leanings toward socialism. I hate to say that. For the past decade I've been in a state of despair politically, feeling very unrepresented. The world is in transition and there are two possible reactions to it. One is to embrace it and engage it and to try to accommodate and plan for it. And the other is to try to fight and deny it and keep it out, a very conservative approach. That reactionary conservative thing is what's been going on. It seems the American public's been in a dream state of denial, and what we ask of our leaders is that they prepare for us television shows defining us as a mythical American population, telling us things about ourselves that we want to hear. Meanwhile, there are realities about education, health care, social justice, civil rights and environmental protection that have slipped by, that are completely dropped. And the people in the position of conservative power and holding onto what's theirs (what they've taken—it may or may not be theirs) are having the most impact on policy. I think we have a hangover now. It's been a party: delusion, denial and greed raised to the level of patriotism. I hear more and more that people are disgusted with this phase and feel as though they've blacked out for a decade. When national politics is acted out on television and television marketing is the model for how we run campaigns and choose our leaders, we're asking for people to lie to us. We're selecting people who can deceive us, who can manipulate opinions in a very cynical way. I hope that can change. That's gonna require a difference in our public consciousness, and I'm afraid that kind of thing only comes about when the water starts to pour in the windows.

—Peter Cronin

Photograph: Lee Crum

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LETTERS

Jesus Saves

WHEN FIRST I LAID EYES ON YOUR October cover, I was struck immediately by the line "Can Jesus Jones Save Rock 'n' Roll?" Can Joseph Mengele revive interest in the Yiddish folk songs? Can David Duke reinvent the Negro spiritual? You fellas tell me.

Could it be Jesus Jones' musical originality? The whole output of the current Manchester scene rests firmly on the already charted seas of American psychedelia and James Brown's "funky drummin'."

Could it be their lyrical creativity? They are, after all, the self-proclaimed celebrators of "meaninglessness" (*MTV Music News* 9/91). "Right here, right now..." Where and when exactly do they mean? Entrusting bands like Jesus Jones with the future of rock 'n' roll music is a bit like leaving Catherine the Great in charge of the livestock. She *seems* like a nice enough lady and she really *loves* animals...

Cole Carter
Nashville, TN

SO BEING ANGRY ABOUT SOCIAL CONditions is now a "rock cliché"? That is an ignorant and offensive statement, and Bill Flanagan ought to know better. If Mike Edwards agrees with George Bush's claptrap about the new world order, or if he naively (and blindly) thinks that the fall of the Berlin Wall has changed the quality of life for the majority of the world's citizens (or even a minority of Eastern Europeans), he is obviously free to ride the coattails of—and cash in on—that phony optimism.

Wanting to change the pitiful condition of our world is not an idea that comes and goes with hemlines and hairstyles. Some of us see a lot of needless suffering in the world, and we don't think it's a cliché to get angry about it—and to write songs about that anger.

Laura Kaminker
New York, NY

MAYBE MIKE EDWARDS OF JESUS Jones could combine forces with Yes and producer Jonathan Elias and record a studio project together. Mr. Elias could bring in an army of studio musicians and samplers to replace the ever-absent band members and Paul McCartney could write all the orchestrations. They could call it "Yes, Oh Jesus" and it would win a Grammy award under the heading, "Most pompous thing ever to dare call itself 'Rock 'n' Roll.'"

C. Scott Carome
Madison, WI

Mark This

GREAT KNOPFLER INTERVIEW (OCT. '91)! What a guy. Bill Flanagan did good too.

Peter Jackson
St. Louis, MO

YOUR ARTICLE ON DIRE STRAITS totally neglected the membership of Terry Williams (Man, Rockpile, Straits), from *Twistin' by the Pool* through *Brothers in Arms*. His work on both bits of vinyl was supported by Pick Withers in the first case and Omar Hakim in the second. And I'm not a drummer, but I enjoyed his playing during his turns in each band. So where is Terry and what's he doing? Oh—and John Illsley did a solo album during the band's layoff.

Edh Stanley
Sacramento, CA

Frankly

WHAT ZAPPA (NOV. '91) WAS SAYING OF the music industry is systematic of the whole U.S.A. Look at the American auto industry or the space program. They can't send a rocket up without it blowing up or going off course.

$1 million a day to keep dust off the Hubble telescope and they get it up and the lens is broken? Shoe salesmen are running the world.

Chad Perry
Sapphire, NC

I CAN SEE THE TV COMMERCIALS NOW: "Finally, a politician who will be Frank." To balance the ticket, I suggest his vice-presidential running mate be Jimmy Swaggart.

Robert E. Rogoff
Skokie, IL

ZAPPA THE MAESTRO AND CRANK
Has testified callous yet frank
The industry's pitch
Has made music the witch
Once drowning, now frowning,
she's sank.

Mark Farfaglia
Palo Alto, CA

THANKS FOR MATT RESNICOFF'S ARTIcle with Frank Zappa. As a musician, I find Zappa's words a source of inspiration and encouragement. It's tough when the real world dictates what is "hip" and "successful," especially when one happens to be driven to create something that doesn't conform to the magic formula. The key is to honestly believe in what you are doing so if the world doesn't latch on at least you can live with yourself.

Mark Oppenlander
Philadelphia, PA

FOR ME, THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY TWO verbal geniuses in the history of rock. Sadly, John Lennon is gone—thank God we still have Frank Zappa!

Rick Genovese
Middletown, CT

Life in the Travel Lane

I ENJOYED YOUR "PLEASE HELP GARfunkel Find a New Partner" (*Backside*, Oct. '91). How about "Please Find Brian Wilson a New Lyricist." Perhaps Brian could team up with Don Henley. They could write "Welcome to the Hotel California, Girls." If everything went well with their collaboration they could form a group and call it the Beagles.

Doug Schenker
Annapolis, MD

Chart Beat

TO THE LOWER RIGHT OF THE *MUSIcian Charts* (Oct. '91) there's some printing which is too small for those of us over 40 to read...let me get my reading glasses...well, by-crackey! Somebody out there has realized that we *baby-boomers* who retain some hearing capability have *lots* more money than teenagers and are buying music—or would like to if certain record companies would record and *promote* something other than children's (the under-25 crowd) music.

...BUT, beware! We're tired of repackaged *classic rock* (an oxymoron if ever there was one). Perhaps some forward-thinking radio station (another oxymoron?) would give airplay to artists such as Richard Thompson, Marshall Crenshaw, Toni Childs, John Hiatt, Clive & Christine, Roger McGuinn...and the *many* mature musicians making intelligent, adult music. In my humble opinion, there's not only fun to be had, there's money to be made!

Jim Stringer
Lawrence, KS

Airata

WE MANAGED TO SPELL TOM CHEYney's name wrong twice in the November '91 issue: On page 22 we spelled it "Cheney," and on the Contents page we spelled it "Gene Santoro."

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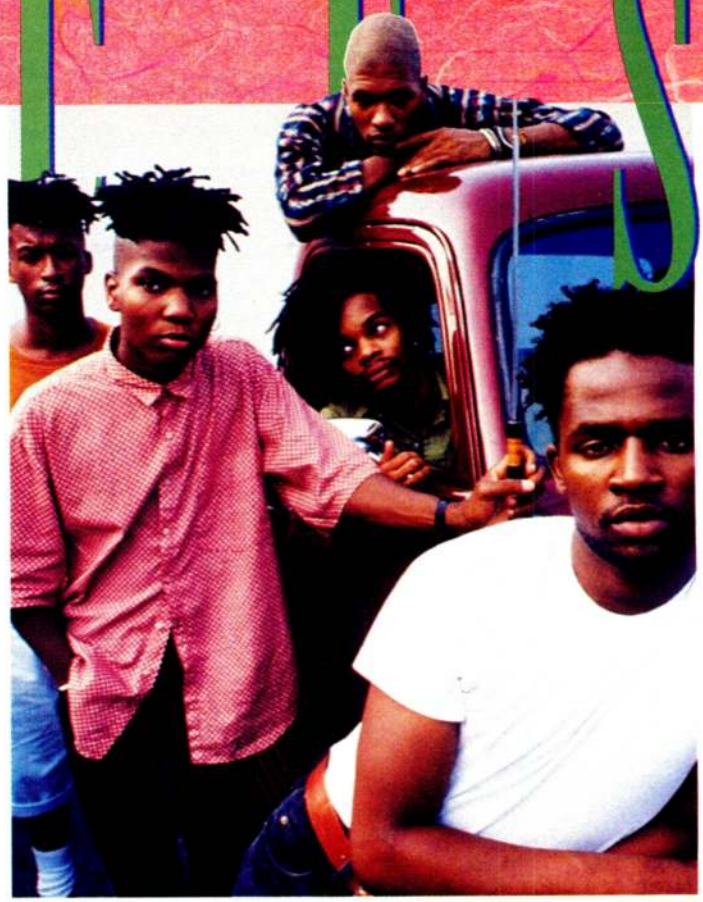

Naughty by Nature

BUT NOT EVIL

"WE WANTED IT TO BE A MYSTERY, SOMETHING YOU DON'T GET right away," says Treach, explaining how the mega-smash "O.P.P." came about. "We didn't think people would listen to *all* the words."

Listen they have, making New Jersey's Naughty by Nature one of the hottest new entries on the street scene. Rappers Treach and Vinnie, plus DJ Kaygee, have struck gold with a tasty combination of raucous party sounds, highlighted by a sample of the Jackson 5's "ABC," and playfully risqué lyrics on the subject of gettin' some action with other people's, uh, partners.

Not bad for a debut, though it isn't really their first time. A couple of years ago, when they called themselves New Style, the guys entered into a production deal with hip-hop pioneer Sylvia Robinson (of Sugar Hill fame), cutting what Treach refers to as a "watered-down" record destined to be a "shelf-sitter." In other words, no promotion, no airplay and no sales. After attorneys helped them escape that dead end, the trio hooked up with Queen Latifah's management company and got busy in earnest.

Naughty by Nature's self-titled album showcases a group with more to offer than a catchy novelty hit. Pumped up by real keyboards and drums, the tracks are tough and aggressive, with high-powered raps reflecting diverse influences, including a healthy shot of reggae. Closest to home, the bleak "Ghetto Bastard" explores the harsh realities of their East Orange neighborhood. Says Vinnie, "Where we come from, there's only one direction to go. A lot of our friends are locked up now." Adds Treach casually, "I was always running in the streets and getting into something when I was younger. If I hadn't gone into music, I'm sure I'd be in trouble today."

JON YOUNG

Follow for Now

METALSOULRAP AND MUSICAL LITERACY

A WORKING KNOWLEDGE OF THE RULES OF HIP HELPED keep singer/guitarist David Ryan Harris of Follow For Now tight with his friends back when he liked pop crooner Gino Vanelli. "Naw, I didn't use a boom box with [Vanelli's] 'Brother to Brother' on it when I walked through the neighborhood or anything," says Harris, who grew up in a black section of Atlanta, where the urban funk and rap of Parliament, Cameo and the Sugarhill Gang ruled.

But when he wound up at a predominantly white high school, Harris found he could turn the boys in his 'hood on to the heavy metal his high school friends were listening to: "If I were to play Led Zeppelin's 'Kashmir,' my black friends would get into it 'cause the beat is so kicking."

Now, of course, it's hip to mix chunka-chunka metal guitar, earnest soul, hip-hop, ska and everything else you heard growing up—which is what Follow For Now manages on its self-titled debut. The only trick, says Harris, is musical literacy.

Call it jumping onto a polyglot bandwagon. Mention Living Colour and Fishbone, and it'll irk guitarist Chris Tinsley, who mimics Slayer's "Angel of Death" riff on a cover of Public Enemy's "She Watch Channel Zero": "We got started way before we ever heard of Living Colour."

"I like what Lenny Kravitz is doing," Harris says, "but anybody that's really musically literate can see through his influences. I go back to the source."

MATTY KARAS

Photography: Ruth Leitman (top); Ernie Paniccioli

FACES

The Snapdragons Go Crazy! Wanna Come?

THE TWISTING ROAD LEADING TO THE MENTAL INSTITUtion where the Snapdragons practice in an abandoned chapel creates an undeniably sinister Ken Russell ambience. The band thinks nothing of it—their gear shines on the pulpit, facing piles of dusty hymn books stacked on back pews.

"It's a sweet deal," says drummer Sean Furlong. "People come in and jam," says bassist Jeff Pistana, "but they never bother us." We pass a patient who strikes a Madonna pose as she waves vigorously to the band. The Snapdragons wave back.

Wire-haired guitarist and singer/songwriter Noel Rockwood fronts this Athens, Ohio trio, which rose to national-artist status the old-fashioned way. "Jeff did it," says Rockwood. Pistana struggles with an accordion file, then pulls a worn Xerox from the "A" slot: "Yeah, I just went to the library, got these addresses and started writing record companies. I figured, 'Hell, it couldn't hurt.'"

Their four-song demo fell into the right hands at Atlantic Records, and quicker than you can say "Snapdragons," they were California-bound to record an engaging self-titled disc marked by quirky, accelerated tunes and some truly steaming playing.

"It was cool beans when Atlantic called us," laughs Furlong, plugging in for another afternoon at the asylum. Other Snapdragon heads nod in agreement: "Cool beans, definitely."

CHUCK DEAN

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CONCERT PRODUCER BILL GRAHAM EXPECTED EVERYONE IN HIS EMPLOY, from ushers to headlining musicians, to exert themselves as much as he did. That didn't make him easy to work for, but it did establish his reputation for integrity—a trait not normally associated with his profession. In the late '60s Graham's Fillmore theaters in San Francisco and New York regularly delivered state-of-the-art rock shows, musically and technically. And the feisty impresario became nearly as well known as his top-selling acts. Graham shut the energy-draining Fillmores in 1971 but remained active in the music business as a promoter with a social conscience. His 1974 tour with Bob Dylan and the Band established the now-common practice of a single promoter handling an entire tour. In the 1980s he directed many high-profile concerts, including the American half of Live Aid. Graham also managed artists, including Santana and, in the late '70s, Van Morrison. On October 25 he took a helicopter home from a nearby Huey Lewis concert in the Bay Area. The helicopter struck a utility tower and crashed, killing Graham, his companion and the pilot. There will be no shortage of ambitious people who will try to grab pieces of his empire, but Bill Graham will never be replaced. SCOTT ISLER

NEWS

BREAKING INTO MUSIC IS HARD WORK; WITHOUT adequate resources and education it's near impossible. A non-profit organization called Add Joy To Learning is being designed to provide young New Yorkers with workshops and classes in songwriting, theory and performance for all styles of music. The program is still in its planning stage, but hopes to involve the Board of Ed and city youth agencies as an enticement for inner-city kids to spend their time constructively, get creative and get ahead—sounds good. Inquiries and donations should be directed to Audrey Levine, P.O. Box 393, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113; (212) 807-8344.

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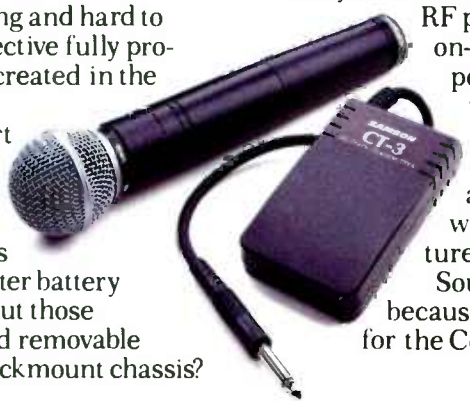

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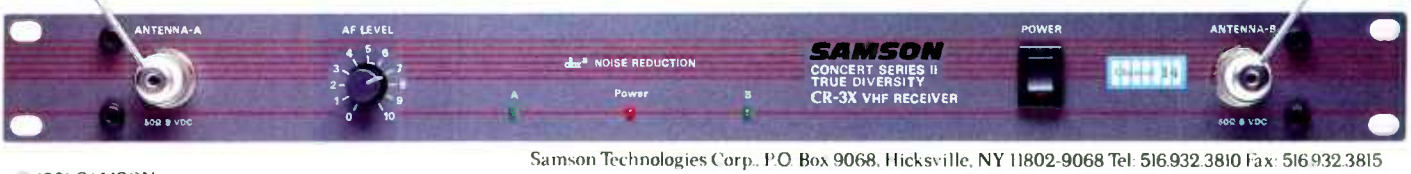

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THE MUSICIAN CHARTS

Top 100 Albums

The first number indicates the position of the album this month, the second its position last month.

1 • 8	**Garth Brooks**	*Ropin' the Wind*/Capitol
2 • 26	**Guns N' Roses**	*Use Your Illusion II*/Geffen
3 • 32	**Guns N' Roses**	*Use Your Illusion I*/Geffen
4 • 1	**Metallica**	*Metallica*/Elektra
5 • 35	**Mariah Carey**	*Emotions*/Columbia
6 • 76	**Bryan Adams**	*Waking Up the Neighbours*/A&M
7 • 11	**Garth Brooks**	*No Fences*/Capitol
8 • —	**Mötley Crüe**	*Decade of Decadence*/Elektra
9 • 2	**Natalie Cole**	*Unforgettable*/Elektra
10 • —	**Prince**	*Diamonds and Pearls*/Paisley Park
11 • 6	**Michael Bolton**	*Time, Love and Tenderness*/Columbia
12 • 5	**Boyz II Men**	*Cooleyhighharmony*/Motown
13 • 3	**Bonnie Raitt**	*Luck of the Draw*/Capitol
14 • —	**Public Enemy**	*Apocalypse 91... The Enemy Strikes Back*/Def Jam
15 • 4	**Color Me Badd**	*C.M.B.*/Giant
16 • 14	**Soundtrack**	*The Commitments*/MCA
17 • 17	**Naughty by Nature**	*Naughty by Nature*/Tommy Boy
18 • 46	**Ozzy Osbourne**	*No More Tears*/Associated
19 • 92	**Harry Connick, Jr.**	*Blue Light, Red Light*/Columbia
20 • 9	**Bob Seger & the Silver Bullet Band**	*The Fire Inside*/Capitol
21 • 7	**C&C Music Factory**	*Gonna Make You Sweat*/Columbia
22 • 85	**Red Hot Chili Peppers**	*Blood Sugar Sex Magik* Warner Bros.
23 • 28	**Travis Tritt**	*It's All About to Change* Warner Bros.
24 • 18	**Amy Grant**	*Heart in Motion*/A&M
25 • 12	**Van Halen**	*For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge* Warner Bros.
26 • 15	**R.E.M.**	*Out of Time*/Warner Bros.
27 • 75	**Reba McEntire**	*Rumor Has It*/MCA
28 • 25	**Dire Straits**	*On Every Street*/Warner Bros.
29 • 16	**Paula Abdul**	*Spellbound*/Captive
30 • 15	**Extreme**	*Extreme II Pornograffitti*/A&M
31 • 19	**Bell Biv DeVoe**	*BBBD — Booteity! The Remix Album*/MCA
32 • 29	**The Geto Boys**	*We Can't Be Stopped*/Rap-A-Lot
33 • 49	**Garth Brooks**	*Garth Brooks*/Capitol
34 • 27	**Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers**	*Into the Great Wide Open*/MCA
35 • 10	**Rush**	*Roll the Bones*/Atlantic
36 • 50	**Marky Mark & the Funky Bunch**	*Music for the People*/Interscope
37 • 48	**Alan Jackson**	*Don't Rock the Jukebox*/Arista
38 • 23	**D.J. Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince**	*Homebase*/Jive
39 • —	**John Mellencamp**	*Whenever We Wanted*/Mercury
40 • 33	**Tesla**	*Psychotic Supper*/Geffen
41 • 34	**Trisha Yearwood**	*Trisha Yearwood*/MCA
42 • 36	**Luther Vandross**	*Power of Love*/Epic
43 • —	**Nirvana**	*Nevermind*/DGC
44 • 37	**Firehouse**	*Firehouse*/Epic
45 • —	**Jodeci**	*Forever My Lady*/MCA
46 • 21	**Queensryche**	*Empire*/EMI
47 • —	**James Taylor**	*New Moon Shine*/Columbia
48 • 47	**Ricky Van Shelton**	*Backroads*/Columbia
49 • —	**The 2 Live Crew**	*Sports Weekend*/Lake
50 • 24	**Mariah Carey**	*Mariah Carey*/Columbia
51 • 22	**The Black Crowes**	*Shake Your Money Maker* Def American
52 • 98	**The Cult**	*Ceremony*/Columbia
53 • 20	**Soundtrack**	*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* Morgan Creek
54 • 31	**Skid Row**	*Slave to the Grind*/Atlantic
55 • 43	**Heavy D. & the Boyz**	*Peaceful Journey*/MCA
56 • 30	**N.W.A.**	*Efil4zaggin*/Ruthless
57 • 45	**Rod Stewart**	*Vagabond Heart*/Warner Bros.
58 • 41	**Jesus Jones**	*Doubt*/SBK
59 • 54	**Scorpions**	*Crazy World*/Mercury
60 • 40	**Stevie Nicks**	*Timespace: Best of Stevie Nicks* Modern
61 • 51	**Randy Travis**	*High Lonesome*/Warner Bros.
62 • —	**Vince Gill**	*Pocket Full of Gold*/MCA
63 • —	**A Tribe Called Quest**	*Low End Theory*/Jive
64 • 60	**Clint Black**	*Put Yourself in My Shoes*/RCA
65 • 44	**Candy Dulfer**	*Sexuality*/Arista
66 • —	**Reba McEntire**	*Rumor Has It*/MCA
67 • —	**Eric Clapton**	*24 Nights*/Duck
68 • —	**The Judds**	*Greatest Hits Vol. Two*/Curb
69 • —	**Erasure**	*Chorus*/Sire
70 • 81	**Lorrie Morgan**	*Something in Red*/RCA
71 • 42	**EMF**	*Schubert Dip*/EMI
72 • 66	**Original London Cast**	*Phantom of the Opera Highlights* Polydor
73 • 59	**Madonna**	*The Immaculate Collection* Sire
74 • 72	**Michael Bolton**	*Soul Provider*/Columbia
75 • —	**Barbra Streisand**	*Just for the Record.../Columbia*
76 • 56	**Neil Diamond**	*Lorescape*/Columbia
77 • 70	**Karyn White**	*Ritual of Love*/Warner Bros.
78 • —	**P.M. Dawn**	*Of the Heart, Of the Soul & Of the Cross*/Gee Street/Island
79 • —	**Various Artists**	*Two Rooms: Songs of Elton John* Polydor
80 • 97	**Dolly Parton**	*Eagle When She Flies*/Columbia
81 • —	**Digital Underground**	*Sons of the P*/Tommy Boy
82 • 52	**The KLF**	*White Room*/Arista
83 • 38	**Seal**	*Seal*/Sire
84 • —	**Nine Inch Nails**	*Pretty Hate Machine*/TVT
85 • 100	**Big Audio Dynamite II**	*Globe*/Columbia
86 • 75	**Bonnie Raitt**	*Nick of Time*/Capitol
87 • —	**George Winston**	*Summer*/Windham Hill
88 • —	**Scarface**	*Mr. Scarface Is Back*/Rap-A-Lot
89 • —	**Ice Cube**	*Death Certificate*/Priority
90 • —	**Hammer**	*Too Legit to Quit*/Capitol
91 • 53	**Richie Sambora**	*Stranger in This Town*/Mercury
92 • —	**Robbie Robertson**	*Storyville*/Capitol
93 • 74	**Tanya Tucker**	*What Do I Do with Me*/Capitol
94 • 57	**Another Bad Creation**	*Coolin' at the Playground Ya'Know!* Motown
95 • 61	**Aaron Neville**	*Warm Your Heart*/A&M
96 • 39	**Soundtrack**	*Boyz N the Hood*/Qwest
97 • 63	**Wilson Phillips**	*Wilson Phillips*/SBK
98 • —	**Simply Red**	*Stars*/EastWest
99 • 55	**Roxette**	*Joyride*/EMI
100 • 93	**Vanessa Williams**	*The Comfort Zone*/Wing

The Musician album chart is produced by the Billboard chart department for Musician, and reflects the combined points for all album reports gathered by the Billboard computers in the month of October. The concert chart is based on Amusement Business Box Score reports for October 1991. All charts are copyright 1991 by BPI Incorporated.

Top Concert Grosses

1	**Walden Woods Benefit: Don Henley, Billy Joel, Sting, Jimmy Buffett, Bonnie Raitt** *Madison Square Garden, New York, NY*/October 21–22, 24	$2,903,800
2	**Luther Vandross, Sinbad, Lisa Fischer, Sounds of Blackness** *Madison Square Garden, New York, NY*/October 2–3, 5–6	$1,499,390
3	**Metallica, Queensryche, Faith No More, Soundgarden** *Oakland Alameda County Stadium, Oakland, CA*/October 12	$1,433,529
4	**Sting, Vinx, Squeeze** *Hollywood Bowl, Hollywood, CA*/October 2–3	$965,045
5	**James Taylor** *The Paramount, New York, NY*/October 25–27 & 29–31	$842,820
6	**George Michael** *Madison Square Garden, New York, NY*/October 25–26	$752,685
7	**Van Halen, Alice in Chains** *Spectrum, Philadelphia, PA*/October 15–16	$688,230
8	**Van Halen, Alice in Chains** *Meadowlands Arena, East Rutherford, NJ*/October 24–25	$632,796
9	**George Michael** *Great Western Forum, Inglewood, CA*/October 5–6	$622,553
10	**AC/DC** *Sydney Entertainment Centre, Sydney, Australia*/October 14–15	$602,613

Numbers Fix

One benefit of *Billboard*'s new Soundscan hookup is that it lets you look at hard numbers. You've no longer got a chaos of retailers phoning in their own often dubious lists of topsellers; whotcha got is a separate firm, Soundscan, mechanically tallying hord data each week, right at the point of sole. Soundscan now tracks 56 percent of all U.S record sales from o network of 3300 record stores and 8000 "racks"—discount-store record departments (which constitute only15 percent of the biz). Unit counts are projections based on that 56 percent (os samples go, pretty big). For the first time ever, you con meaningfully ask: "How many copies did Album A sell this week?"

Glad y'all osked. *Use Your Illusion II* holds the record; more thon 700,000 copies, or better thon the population of San Francisco, flew out of record stores the week of its release. "Number One," we now see, con mean very different things. Observe the difference between G N' R's seven big ones ond, say, N.W.A.'s mere hundred thou the week *it* hit the top. So Number One in a thin release month (typically, Jonuory) probably hos nowhere near the numbers of a November chort-topper.

In o random week ending, say, lost November 9, how many copies of America's bestselling olbum, Gorth Brook's *Ropin' the Wind*, were bought? 175,000.

How many copies did that week's Number Five album (*Metallica*) sell? 70,000, or enough to fill Cleveland Municipal Stodium.

How about Number 50 (*Firehouse*)? 20,000.

How about #200 (Little Feat's *Shake Me Up*)? 4500. Now for some really sobering numbers. Let's take Richard Thompson, whose songs will, I *guarantee* you, be listened to long after Garth Brooks is o Guinness entry. The week Brooks' lotest was deodorizing living rooms nationwide, Thompson's latest, *Rumour and Sigh*, o big corporate push notwithstanding, sold...under 1000 units.—T.S.

BACK ISSUES

VSOP, Jarreau, Mingus
McCoy Tyner, Freddie Hubbard
Chick Corea, avant jazz, Big Joe Turner
Brian Eno, Talking Heads, Weather Report
Bob Marley, Sun Ra, Lydia Lunch
Tom Petty, Dave Edmunds, Wayne Shorter
Grateful Dead, Zappa, Kid Creole, NY Dolls
Black Uhuru, Bill Wyman, Rickie Lee Jones
Willie Nelson, John McLaughlin, the Motels
Stevie Wonder, X, Was (Not Was), Ornette
Peter Wolf, King Crimson, Sly + Robbie
Heavy Metal, Dream Syndicate, Tina Turner
John Fogerty, Marsalis/Hancock, Los Lobos
Jeff Beck, Alison Moyet, John Hiatt–Ry Cooder
Peter Gabriel, Steve Winwood, Lou Reed
Jimi Hendrix, The Cure, Prince, .38 Special
Psychedelic Furs, Elton John, Miles Davis
Robert Cray, Los Lobos, Simply Red
Springsteen, The Blasters, Keith Jarrett
U2, Tom Waits, Squeeze, Eugene Chadbourne
McCartney, Stanley Clarke, Buster Poindexter
Robert Plant, INXS, Wynton Marsalis
Stevie Wonder, Sonny Rollins, Joni Mitchell, Johnny Cash
Sinéad O'Connor, Neil Young, Tracy Chapman
Jimmy Page, Leonard Cohen, Lloyd Cole
Pink Floyd, New Order, Smithereens
Billy Gibbons, Santana/Shorter, Vernon Reid
Keith Richards, Depeche Mode, Steve Forbert
Prince, Steve Winwood, Randy Newman
Guns N' Roses, Midnight Oil, Glyn Johns
Year in Music '88, Metallica, Jack Bruce, Fishbone
Replacements, Fleetwood Mac, Lyle Lovett
Elvis Costello, Jeff Healey, Sonic Youth
Lou Reed, John Cale, Joe Satriani
Miles Davis, Fine Young Cannibals, XTC
Peter Gabriel, Charles Mingus, Bob Mould
The Who, The Cure, Ziggy Marley
10,000 Maniacs, John Cougar Mellencamp, Jackson Brown/Bonnie Raitt
Jeff Beck, Laura Nyro, Billy Sheehan
Don Henley, Rolling Stones, Bob Marley
The '80s, Daniel Lanois, Syd Straw
Grateful Dead, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Paul Kelly
Aerosmith, NRBQ, Richard Thompson, Max Q
George Harrison, The Kinks, Abdullah Ibrahim
Tom Petty, Lenny Kravitz, Rush, The Silos
Paul McCartney, Cecil Taylor, Kronos Quartet
Robert Plant, Suzanne Vega, Soul II Soul, Drums
Jimi Hendrix, David Bowie, Bob Clearmountain
Sinéad O'Connor, John Hiatt, World Party
Steve Vai, Michael Stipe, Malmsteen/McLaughlin
INXS, Neville Bros., Lou Reed/Vaclav Havel
Slash, Replacements, Waterboys, Pixies
Robert Johnson, Bruce Hornsby, Soul Asylum
Pink Floyd, Neil Young, Art Blakey, Black Crowes
Jerry Garcia/Elvis Costello, NWA, Pink Floyd
R.E.M., AC/DC, Top Managers, Jim Morrison
Eddie Van Halen, Fishbone, Byrds, Chris Isaak
Stevie Ray Vaughan, Morrissey, Drum Special
Bonnie Raitt, Tim Buckley, Sonny Rollins
Sting, Stevie Wonder, 15th Anniversary Issue
Paul McCartney, Axl Rose, David Bowie
Dire Straits, Jesus Jones, Paul McCartney
Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa, Primus, Eddy/Fogerty
Miles Davis, Robbie Robertson, Massive Attack
Best of the Beatles and Rolling Stones
Masters of Metal, Metallica, Def Leppard, more

33
The Clash

115
Stevie Wonder

130
10,000 Maniacs

151
Van Halen

142
Sinéad O'Connor

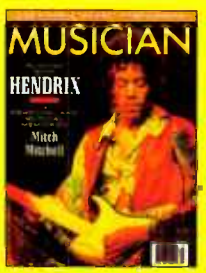
132
Don Henley

104
Bruce Springsteen

122
Guns N' Roses

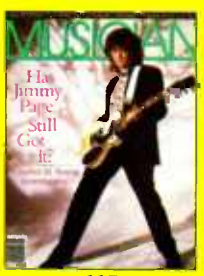
128
Peter Gabriel

112
Paul McCartney



141
Jimi Hendrix

150
R.E.M.



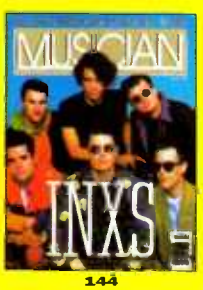
117
Jimmy Page

118
Pink Floyd

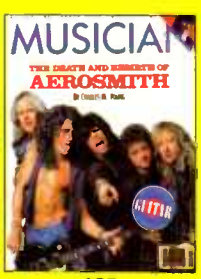
113
Robert Plant

127
Miles Davis

134
Grateful Dead



144
INXS



135
Aerosmith

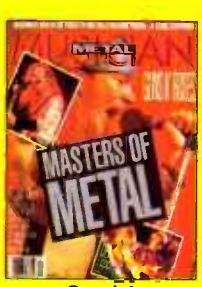
77
John Fogerty

105
John Coltrane

123
Year in Music

143
Steve Vai

Special
Beatles & Stones



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Photograph: Kurt Mundahl

Terence Blanchard Rising

MO' AND MO' BETTER BLUES

By Tom Moon

"EVERYBODY WAS SAD, ONCE." The words rang through the empty club. They came from the mouth of Terence Blanchard, but they belong to Art Blakey, the late drummer and bandleader who helped Blanchard understand the tricky, incremental process that builds a jazzman.

"He was really good at bringing guys like Miles and Clifford down to me," Blanchard said, sitting at the piano at Fat Tuesday's. It was a dark Sunday afternoon, and with his open chords, Blanchard seemed to be calling Blakey's ghost. He talked about his audition to replace Wynton Marsalis in Blakey's Jazz Messengers, which happened right here. The band, sans Art, played while the leader listened through the open doorway and never said a word to Blanchard. Wynton had to call to tell him he'd gotten the gig.

Blakey always told Blanchard to avoid certain songs, because Miles Davis had put an indelible stamp on them. "I'd start to play 'Stella by Starlight' and he'd just shake his head and tell me to find a tune to make my own and try to develop my own voice. He'd sit me down and try to get me to stop idolizing Miles and Clifford. 'They're average people, just like everybody else,' I remember him saying. 'They have an abnormal talent. You have talent too...just work at it.' It was one hell of a thing to say to somebody who had grown up putting those guys on pedestals."

Blanchard, who grew up in New Orleans under the wing of Ellis Marsalis, has outgrown his "sad" stage: Blakey's therapy taught Blanchard, now 29, to pay more attention to what he likes than what is fashionable.

"When you go to school studying music, everything can seem like a doctrine. One thing Art made me understand is that it's okay to make choices based on what I like."

Some choices have been difficult, like splitting up the successful group he led with saxophonist Donald Harrison because he needed to spend a year learning a less physically taxing trumpet technique. Or like putting his own music on hold for months in order to score Spike Lee's movies *Mo' Better Blues* and *Jungle Fever*. Or developing a writing style that breaks him out of the Messengers mold and lets him investigate modal music and other forms.

The result was a leap forward: Evidence is on *Terence Blanchard*, his first solo effort. Where Blanchard might once have spat out a solo album of blazing post-bop, he now caresses ballads—he's learned patience.

Between questions, Blanchard played the piano. His is not the hunt-and-peck attack of an arranger groping for a voicing: He is assured and utterly rhythmic, totally in control of the piano. The tunes, like him, are reserved—they sneak up and demonstrate their sophistication in a whisper. They're not nearly as declarative as Wynton Marsalis' best writing, but they probe and challenge in that same deep way.

"Blakey encouraged us to write all the time. He believed that's how you find yourself. But I was so enthralled with being a Messenger that I kept writing in that style, even though Art kept trying to break us away from that—he wanted to bring something new to the band."

When Blanchard finally did branch from the Messengers sound, it [*cont'd on page 27*]

Photograph: Rex Miller

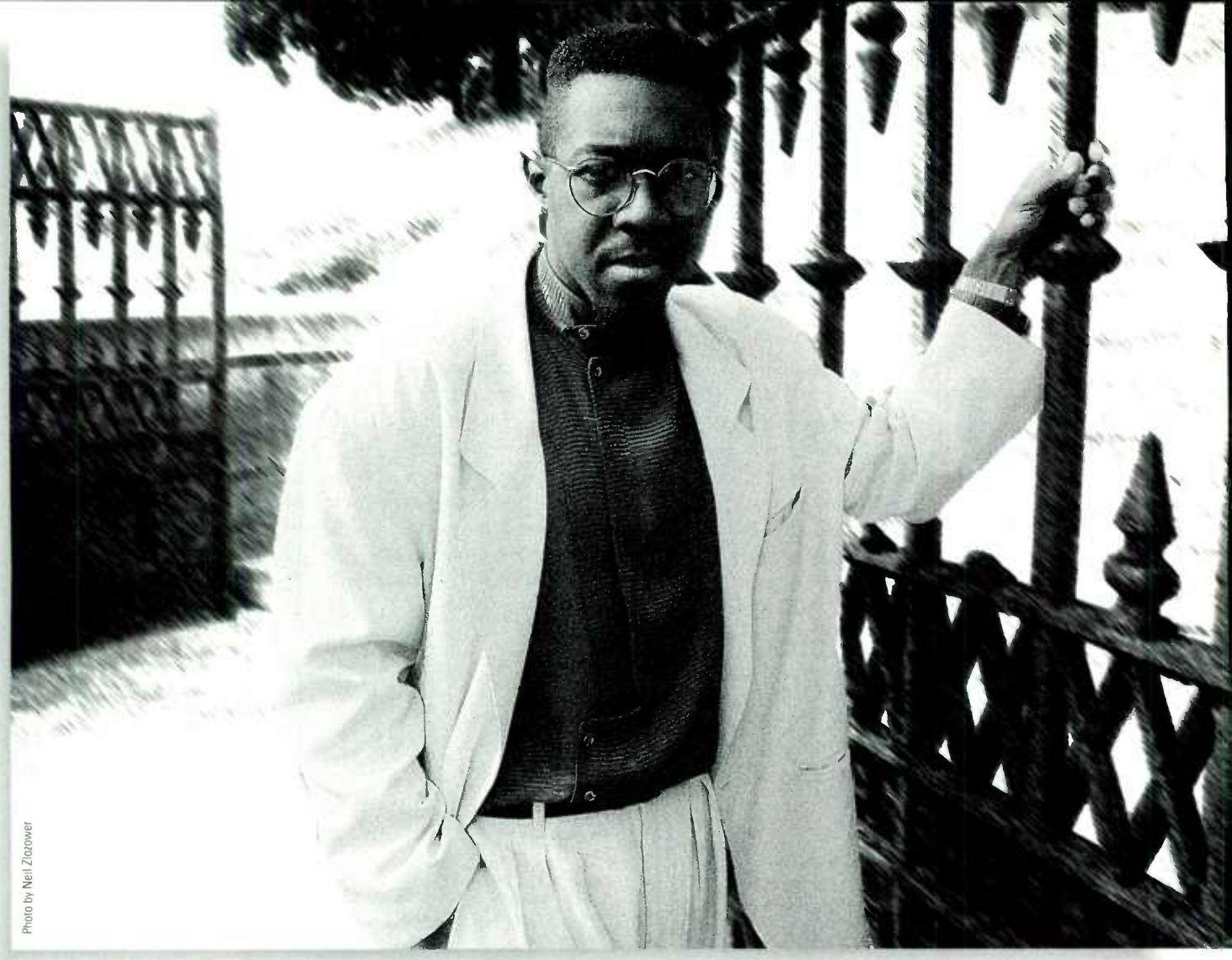

Photo by Neil Zlozower

Marvin "Smitty" Smith

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Eyes of a Child

DESMOND CHILD GOES FROM ANTHEMS TO INNOCENCE

By Paul Grein

RECORD BUYERS WHO SEE THE name *D. Child* in songwriting credits have a pretty good idea of what's in store—anthemic arena-rockers that blend catchy choruses and tongue-twisting alliterations. Hits like Bon Jovi's "You Give Love a Bad Name," Aerosmith's "Dude (Looks Like a Lady)," Joan Jett & the Blackhearts' "I Hate Myself for Loving You" and Alice Cooper's "Poison" have made Desmond Child the master of teen rock raveups.

It was Kiss' Paul Stanley who taught Child what teenage boys do and don't want to hear in a song. Child calls it the Headbanger Philosophy. "They don't want to hear songs about being vulnerable, being weak, being hurt by someone," he explains, sitting in the sunny breakfast nook of his Southwestern-style Santa Monica home.

So hard rock fans who buy Child's first solo album *Discipline* may be in for a surprise. Most of the material reflects a decidedly adult perspective. It includes a solemn song in which a man mourns the child he and his girlfriend once had aborted; a philosophical ballad which Child dedicates to his younger brother Joey, who died of AIDS in January; and a sensitive song in which a man confesses, "I've got a lot to learn about love tonight."

What will headbangers think of Child's album? "I'm not writing for a beer-bash party," he says. "I'm writing about who I am and I'm an adult man. If people are going to be into me, they're going to have to take all of me and not just the one little slice that's commercial at the moment."

Child, 37, makes the comment with a quiet insistence that is characteristic. Introspective and somewhat shy, he projects a childlike vulnerability. Yet the quest for spiritual fulfillment which has dominated his life has also brought him confidence and clarity. Asked if he might be too reflective to make it in a world of hard-core publicity, Child replies, "Sting's reflective. Kevin Costner's reflective."

The most provocative song on Child's record is "The Gift of Life," the rumination on abortion. "I wouldn't ever want to suggest that people not have a choice," he says, "but we have to be responsible in our choices. And in order to have choice you have to have options. I got a girl pregnant when I was 22. We didn't know our options. We found out she was pregnant on Monday; on Wednesday she had the appointment for the abortion and that was it. And now I'm 37, saying, 'God, I could have had a pal, somebody who loved me unconditionally.'"

Child—whose real name is John Barrett, Jr.—got into music as a way to escape a painful and impoverished childhood. "We were Cuban refugees, and when I was growing up it was not cool to be Cuban; it was not 'in,'" he remembers, his voice tightening. "When my parents separated, my brother and mother and I just kicked around Miami. We moved every six months because we didn't have rent money. I didn't have cool clothes to wear. Low self-esteem comes from being underprivileged. You want so much to fit in and you don't.

"When I was 16, I met somebody who believed in me. She named me Desmond Child. All of a sudden, as Desmond Child, I was special. I could be anything I wanted to be. That's what led to Desmond Child & Rouge."

That act, which featured Child and three female backup singers, stayed together for six years, recording two albums for Capitol and gaining some notice in the late-'70s disco club scene. But when it broke up in 1980, Child was more lost than ever. "I

Photograph: Christopher Harting

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had just turned 25. We had been at it since I was 19. There was a lot of growing up we didn't do, so I began a process of searching—EST training, Scientology meetings, yoga, Eastern religion. I lived for a time in an ashram in India and came back and joined a commune."

If Child becomes a star, his five years in an artists' commune in Virginia may become as notorious a symbol of emotional distress in pop as Brian Wilson's living-room sandbox. But if the word *commune* conjures up '60s images of free love, start thinking chores, mind-control and self-sacrifice.

"It was a very ascetic existence. No one owned anything. Everything you made went to the foundation. I lived in two worlds: I compressed my week in the city into four days, working day and night and barely sleeping. Then I'd rush back to the commune so I could do my chores and be at the group meetings on weekends. I was really burning the wick at both ends."

Child started reassessing his life in 1988 when he, along with 20 other top songwriters, attended a songwriter summit in Moscow. "I fell apart," he says. "I saw what 75 years of living for the good of all had done to those people and to their spirit of creativity. I was just appalled by the parallel. I went back and said, 'Maybe I'm having culture shock, but I need some time away to think about what I want.' I moved to California, but it took a long time to be able to enjoy my life and be happy about who I am, faults and all."

The commune experience certainly didn't stifle Child's career. With Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora, Child has written three number one hits since 1986. He's also made inroads as a producer in recent years, supervising Top 10 hits for Cher, Michael Bolton, Alice Cooper and Joan Jett & the Blackhearts.

Child co-wrote one song on *Discipline* with Burt Bacharach, who is in his pantheon of songwriting idols, as are Joni Mitchell, Stevie Wonder and, above all, Laura Nyro. "She totally mesmerized me," Child gushes. "I had all kinds of sexual and romantic fantasies about her. She was the Virgin Mary to me, the Earth Mother, a kind of mythic female figure. To me, she's been as influential in the revolution of pop as the Beatles. Her influence made music modern, particularly her approach to lyrics and imagery. I don't know one songwriter who hasn't been influenced by her."

Would Child ever like to write with her?

His eyes widen. "I'd like to just have *tea* with her," he says.

Desmond's Decks

DESMOND CHILD plays Kramer guitars, a Roland digital piano and a LinnDrum machine. He has a Korg T1/M1 music workstation, a Technics 290 power amp/tape deck and Yamaha NS-10M studio monitors. He also has a Yamaha 1604 MC series mixing console, a Technics two-track 1500, a Master Room XL-305 echo unit, a dbx/163 compressor limiter and a Lexicon LXP-5.

TEENAGE FANCLUB

[*cont'd from page 21*] songs. "Because we're all young, we don't have much else to write about," says Brendan. "It matters, and comes easy as well. An A minor always sounds nice after a C."

Like the Replacements—perhaps their nearest U.S. equivalent—Teenage Fanclub also has an irreverently affectionate way with cover versions. In tribute to Lennon's 50th

birthday, they released a limited edition of their take on "The Ballad of John and Yoko." And in 1991 they'd hoped to follow it up. Says Norman: "We had planned to commemorate Lennon's 51st with a Bed-In and invite all the press. But Brendan was too ill. In bed."

FANCLUBBING THE FLAMES

NORMAN BLAKE plays a Heritage Firebird through an MXR distortion and a Marshall JCM800 amp with Groove Tubes. RAYMOND McGINLEY hefts a Les Paul goldtop and a 1963 Fender Jaguar through a Marshall JMP100 with Groove Tubes and, for leads, a tube rack unit. Their strings are Ernie Ball Super Slinkies. GERRY LOVE plucks a Fender Jazz bass through an Ampeg amp with Groove Tubes and a Turbo Rat distortion pedal. BRENDAN O'HARE's drums are Sonor, his cymbals Zildjian. Microphones are Shure SM58s.

BLANCHARD

[*cont'd from page 22*] was with a little help from Spike Lee. The trumpeter played on the soundtrack to *School Daze* and was enlisted to play Denzel Washington's trumpet parts on *Mo' Better Blues*. During a break in recording that soundtrack, Blanchard was playing one of his tunes at the piano. Lee asked Terence to play it again.

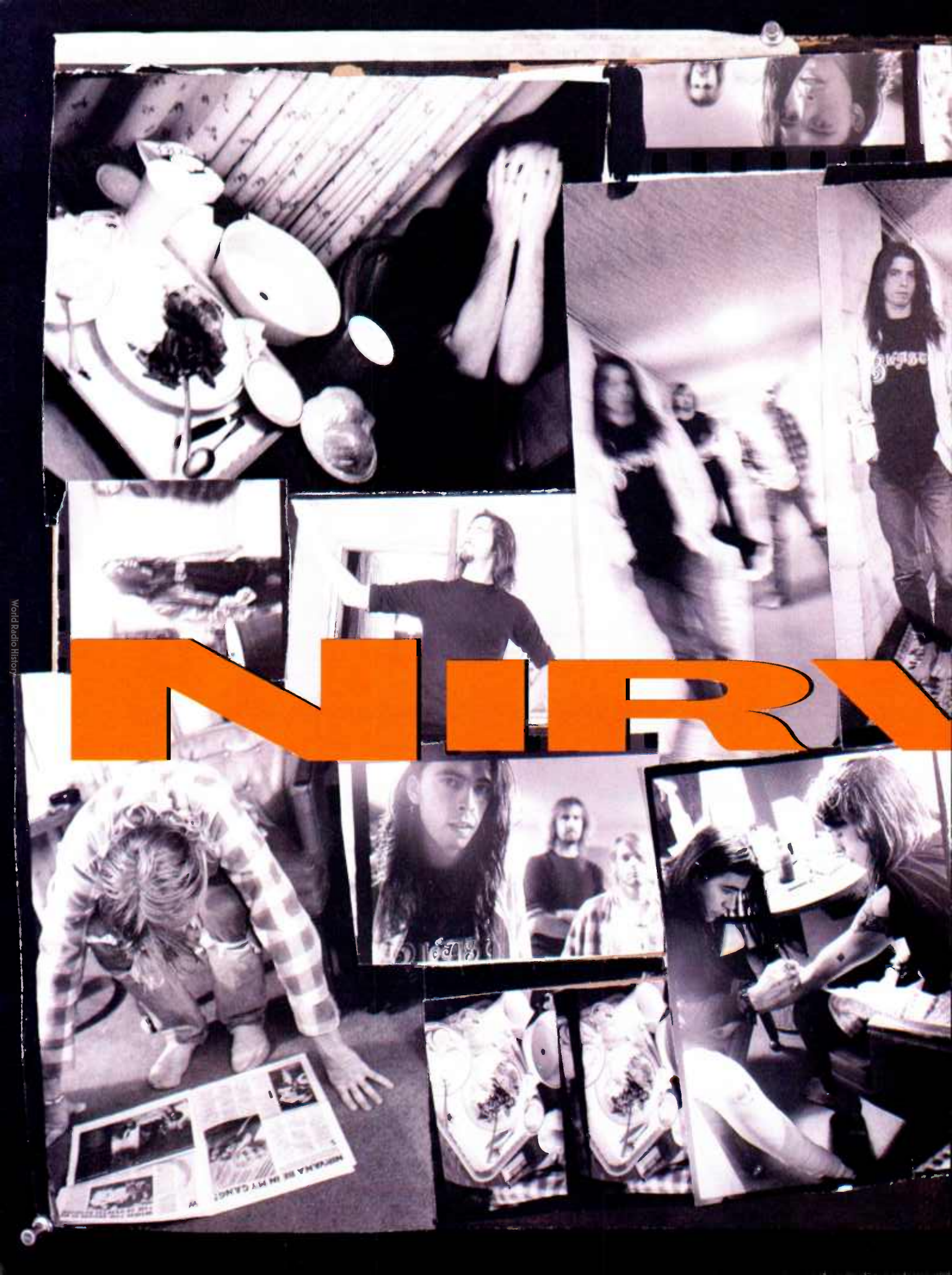
"He said he wanted to use it in the movie. So we recorded it a cappella. Spike asked if I could add a string arrangement. Never having written for strings before, I said, 'Sure.' When I finished it, he said it looked like I had a future writing for films...I didn't think anything of it. When it came time to do *Jungle Fever* he called and said, 'I want you to write the score.'"

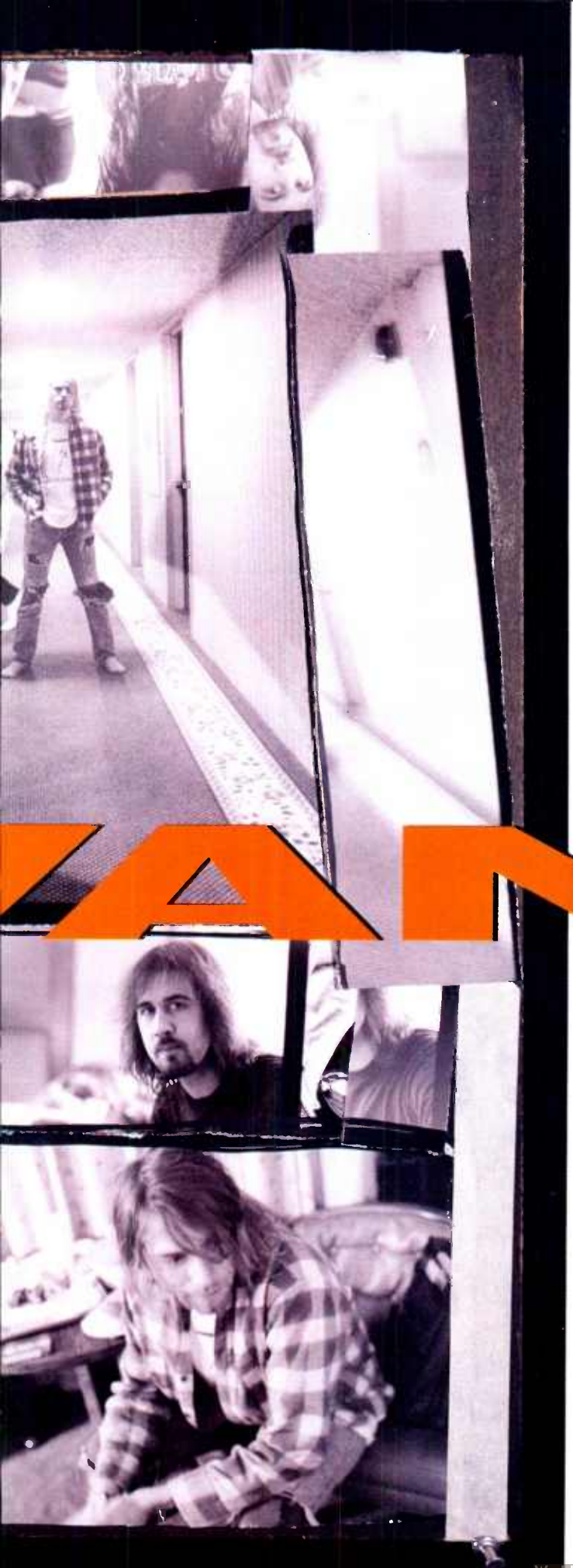
For his film biography of Malcolm X, Lee has again enlisted Blanchard. "It's a natural choice," said Lee one recent day. "Terence has a distinct voice, and he's able to interpret things a lot of different ways, for various combinations of instruments. Often people are talented but it doesn't work. We mesh together really well."

Blanchard has surrounded himself with young musicians who share his dedication. "Everything happens in its own time. This industry wants everything *now*, and doesn't want to give you time to grow. There's been this hysteria to sign young musicians. I hope the guys don't believe the hype, and understand that it's still about making music. There are a lot of guys who say they love the music and will mouth off all the rhetoric they think people want to hear, but their actions tell a different story. I want to help younger cats—there are very few places for them to play. So I looked for people who wanted to play as much as I did."

Brass Tacks

TERENCE BLANCHARD plays the Raja model trumpet crafted by David Monette of Chicago. "He made one for Wynton, and before he delivered it he brought it to my house and let me play it. I knew immediately I needed one. It projects, it's very free-blowing." His setup starts with the Macintosh SE driven by Vision sequencer and Encore printing software. His keyboard is the Korg SG10 sampling grand, and his sound sources include the Proteus II, the Akoi S-1100 for brass, the Roland R-8 drum machine and two reverbs—Roland's R-2000, Yamaha's Rev-5.





The Year's Hottest New Band Can't Stand Still

NIRVANA

"House calls are making a comeback," notes Chris Novoselic, Nirvana's tall, goateed bassist, as he watches a tattoo parlor being set up in his band's North Hollywood motel suite. Drummer Dave Grohl stares intently as the tattooist, a long-haired guy named Paul, flips through the pages of his sample book. Inks and an electric needle are laid out on a small formica bench; the sharp smell of rubbing alcohol perfumes the air.

"I'm gonna get Black Flag—the bars," guitarist Kurt Cobain says with a cackle. "It was such a popular thing for kids to do in the early '80s, to get the bars on their arms. I thought I'd wait until I was 25 to do it."

The pen-ink-and-needle job is a momentary diversion—another way to break up another evening in another motel room that's rapidly approaching squalor, in an atmosphere of escalating lassitude. Sending out for tattoos is, of course, the L.A. thing to do. But, as Cobain wryly suggests, it is also the *punk rock* thing to do. And Nirvana, all of a sudden, is *the* punk rock band of the moment.

By Chris Morris

Photography by Merlyn Rosenberg

A month earlier, the Washington state–based trio was one more highly lauded alternative rock act, with two singles, an EP and the album *Bleach*, all on the Sub Pop label. Two years' worth of tours had elevated the band to demigod status among underground headbangers, but that buzz had yet to translate into national prominence.

Prominence came with a bang in September, when Geffen's DGC Records issued *Nevermind*, Nirvana's major-label debut. Music-industry handicappers gaped in awe as the album entered the *Billboard* chart at number 144...clambered its second week to number 109...vaulted to number 65...rocketed to number 35...and, in only its seventh week on the charts, blasted to number four, nipping at the heels of Guns N' Roses' heavily hyped *Use Your Illusion I & II*.

The record's unexpected rise was fueled by MTV's rapid rotation of the video for *Nevermind*'s first single, "Smells Like Teen Spirit." The song—a caustic anti-anthem about youthful apathy that boasts the sardonic hook line "Here we are now, entertain us"—was dressed by director Sam Bayer in flamboyantly anti-establishment colors, decked out with a mutant high school assembly that included slamming students, a thrashing janitor, tattooed cheerleaders and a bound-and-gagged principal. That, combined with burgeoning airplay at modern rock radio and album-oriented stations, sold 600,000 copies of *Nevermind* in five weeks. No mean feat, considering that it took R.E.M. four albums to attain that level; Faith No More hit similar sales after they had toured for a year behind their breakthrough, *The Real Thing*.

BUT JONATHAN PONEMAN, CO-OWNER OF SUB POP, THE Seattle label that squired Nirvana and such high-profile alternative brethren as Soundgarden, Mudhoney and Tad to major attention, sees Nirvana's popularity as a stroke of lightning. "There was the sort of grass-roots hype on this band I can only compare to when I was a teenager and people said Bruce Springsteen was the best performer in the world," he says. "These three individuals represent their generation. It's a luck of timing: This band not only delivers the goods, they manage to capture the time."

Lounging around their hotel room waiting to be tattooed, the new representatives of their generation appear somewhat nonplussed by Nirvana's success. "I just thought it would be like another successful independent record vibe," says Grohl, whose lantern jaw and long, lank brown hair make him look like the all-American headbanger. "I didn't think it would be that much different than *Bleach*—just a progression."

Adds the pug-nosed Cobain, "I expected our core audience to buy our record within the first couple of weeks, and sales would decline after that. But after I realized that we were on MTV, I suspected we would sell a lot more."

"It's sort of funny," Grohl continues, "because people look at the video like it's some monumental statement. So many people think it's the epitome of this rebellious high school teenage vibe."

Which begs the question: Won't the video's exuberant mosh-pit imagery obscure that song's biting message? Might the legions currently flocking to Nirvana be missing the point?

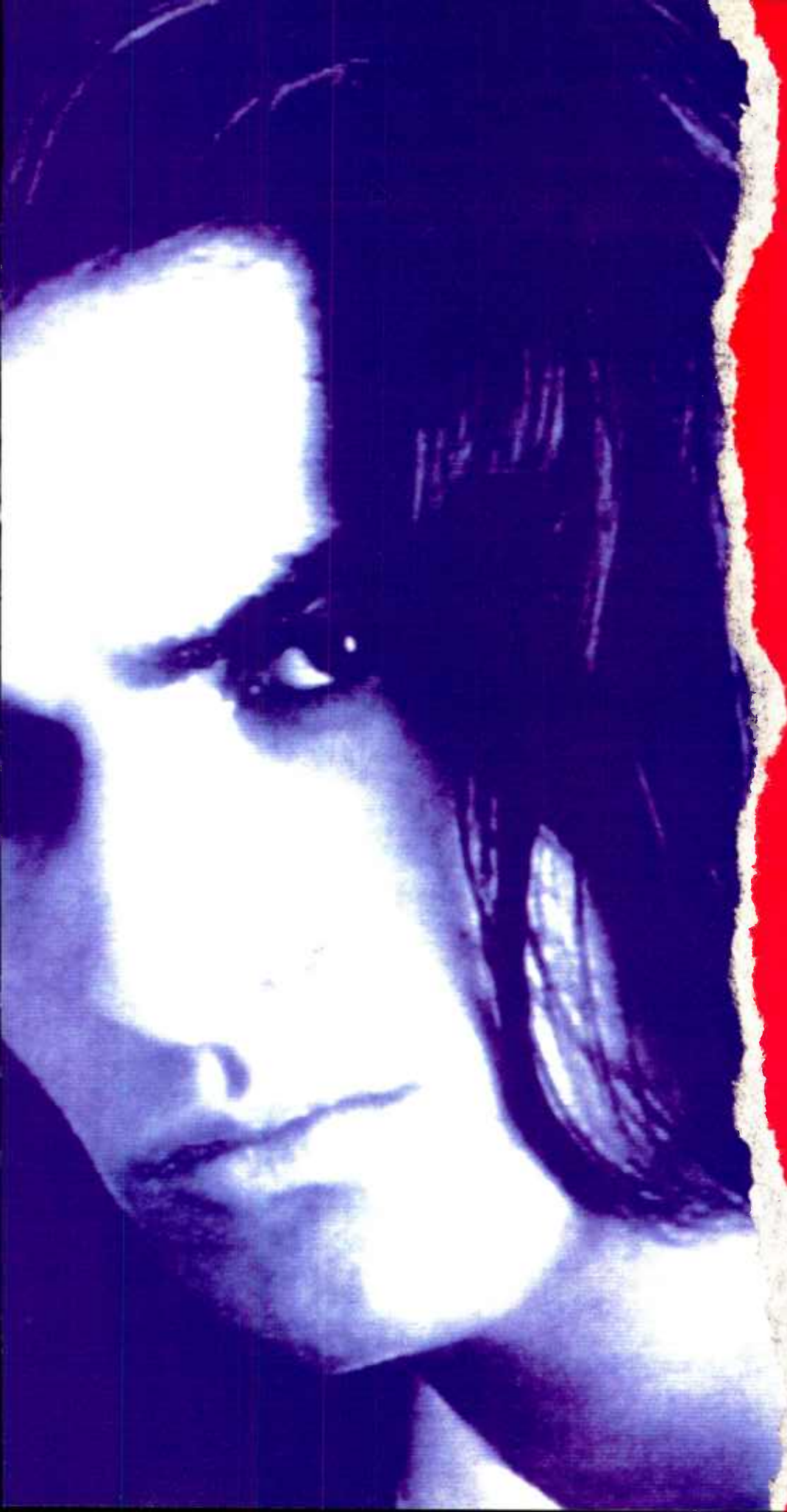
"Definitely," Cobain agrees, with a touch of weariness. "Most of the new fans are people who don't know very much about underground music at all. They listen to Guns N' Roses; maybe they've heard of Anthrax. I can't expect them to understand the message we're trying to put across. But at least we've reeled them in—we've gotten their attention on the music. Hopefully, eventually, maybe that message will dig into their minds. I don't really expect it to."

He pauses, then adds, "It attacks the audience we're supposedly selling our product to. At the same time, it's not malicious, it's not meaning to put them down...." His voice trails off.

Grohl picks up the thread: "Maybe that's one of the reasons we didn't expect the record to go this well. We knew it was against the grain. I mean, the first thing that started freaking me out was playing shows and seeing sort of bi-level redneck logger guys in the front row. I had never expected that kind of audience."

"But it's really selfish to judge your audience like that," Cobain counters. "Because, overall, I can tell from the expressions on everyone's faces that they're enjoying the music. Fuck the message, because it's not half as important as the music in the first place. My mother likes our music. So if I can please her, or our relatives, or anyone who will hear our music on AOR radio who's never heard our type of music before, that means we're doing something right. Besides, we're so similar to Aerosmith and hard-rock music, most kids who like hard-rock music now, who don't know anything about underground music, are obviously going to like us."

The similarity between Nirvana and Aerosmith may begin and end with both bands' propensities for loud guitars and snappy song hooks. Nirvana's contemporary power derives not from *ancien régime* codpiece posturing or scarves dangling from mikestands, but rather from an abiding affection for the cacophonous revelations of early-'80s punk, an ironic and caustic take on adolescent and post-adolescent values in the '90s, and (perhaps most particularly) a will to transcend the cultural slag heap of their hometown environs.



TRI-POWER

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Aberdeen, Washington, where Cobain and Novoselic grew up, borders the Pacific Ocean about 100 miles southwest of Seattle. "'Twin Peaks,'" Cobain says with a wan smile, "without the excitement."

"It's isolated," Novoselic observes, with his typically laconic manner. "It's a wood-industry town, you know. They've been through a lot of hard times. When the economy goes down, less homes are being built, there's less lumber going out. Things work in cycles—three-four years good times, three-four years bad times."

"There's not a lot of enthusiasm among the people of this town at all," Cobain says. "People just don't want to do anything. There's a massive sense of depression and alcoholism. Also, the town, when it first was built, was a seaport, and it was mainly just a whorehouse. The sailors would come and screw the women. Eventually it turned into a little community. So there's also this overall sense that we're a little ashamed of our roots."

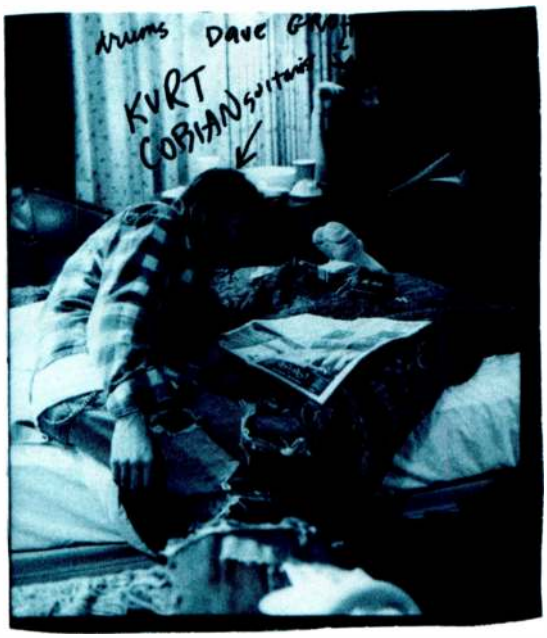
"It's like the edge," Novoselic elaborates. "There's Seattle, there's Olympia, there's Aberdeen, then there's...*China*. No ideas are going through. There's like a collective unconscious there. Just people in their houses, rained out, drinking a lot. A lot of drugs. There's no white-collar, just a few bankers downtown, and lawyers. Public defenders and prosecutors. That's the legal system. Maybe a few private lawyers doing divorce cases."

Cobain, the son of a machinist, and Novoselic, whose father worked in the logging business, met shortly after leaving high school in the mid-'80s, through a mutual friendship with Buzz Osborne, guitarist and singer for the Aberdeen-based punk band the Melvins.

"Buzz and Matt Lukin [now the bass player for Mudhoney] discovered punk rock," Novoselic explains. "They'd go to Seattle and catch all these cool shows and buy records. I told Buzz, 'I play guitar,' and he started turning me on to all these bands, like Flipper, MDC, Butthole Surfers. I thought it was really cool. Then I tried turning people on to it, but I'd just get all these closed-minded reactions. One guy said, 'All that stuff's just, "I wanna fuck my mom, I wanna fuck my mom."' They were just so closed-minded."

"AC/DC or nothing," Cobain interjects scornfully.

To make some cash, Cobain and Novoselic started up a Creedence Clearwater Revival cover band. Cobain played drums, Novoselic guitar. A guy named Steve played bass. "But then he cut his fingers off in a logging accident," Cobain adds, with a dark laugh.



Nirvana began to jell in the fall of 1986, after Cobain and Dale Crover, the Melvins' drummer, recorded a demo, the fragrantly titled *Fecal Matter*, on a four-track machine owned by Cobain's aunt, an aspiring country singer. Novoselic signed on as Nirvana's bassist, Cobain took on full-time guitar chores and Aaron Burkhart became the first in a conga line of drummers. Armed with such eventual staples of the Nirvana repertoire as "Love Buzz," "Floyd the Barber" and "Spank Through," the band started playing in Aberdeen, "in this shitty old house," Novoselic recalls. "We'd play in front of five people. Everybody would be drunk and stoned."

"No one liked it," Cobain says. "But eventually we traveled to Tacoma and Olympia. Hopefully we could play in Seattle some day—that was our big goal."

THE BREAKTHROUGH CAME WHEN JONATHAN Poneman and his Sub Pop partner Bruce Pavitt asked the group to record a 45 for a limited-edition release (1000 copies) for the label's singles club. "Love Buzz"/"Big Cheese" was issued in December of 1988, and the group started getting stage shows in Seattle, many of them set up by Poneman and Pavitt. At times the response was underwhelming: "We played some kind of benefit show on a Sunday afternoon at the Central Tavern," Novoselic remembers. "We showed up, set up, and nobody was there. *Nobody* was there. So we left."

Still, Sub Pop was sufficiently encouraged to release their album *Bleach*, cut in late '88 with drummer Chad Channing. (Although guitarist Jason Everman's name appears on the record, he doesn't play on it; he was performing with the group onstage, and Cobain says his name was slapped on the jacket "to make him feel a part of the band.") Recorded for only $600 in a pure-grunge mode by producer Jack Endino, it features a number of tracks that prefigure "Smells Like Teen Spirit," reflecting the petulant outbursts of a generation gone dumb. "Would you believe it, it's just my luck/*No recess!*" runs the chorus of "School," while "Scoff" features the shrieking refrain, "Gimme back my alcohol."

Following the album's release in June of 1989, the band—including Everman—undertook their first national tour, minus the glamor. "We stayed at this one place in Texas," Cobain recalls, "out in the woods, next to a lake where there were signs all over the grass that said, 'Beware of Alligators.' We slept with baseball bats at our sides." Adds Novoselic, "We hacked up a baseball bat or something, put motor oil on it and tried to cook Cup-A-Soups. That's how we lived. It was fun, though—we were a hardy bunch. What's the word—youthful enthusiasm. It was Kerouwacky."

Everman was booted from the tour upon its conclusion in New York, while Nirvana played onward as a trio. Cobain claims the group did five American and European road stints behind *Bleach*. They were still making $100 a show in Europe in late 1989, crammed into a van with 11 tourmates, including the beefy Sub Pop band Tad. "We mainly survived off of the deli trays—cold cuts every morning."

The next year, Nirvana finally made its move toward the big time. The members were leery of signing a seven-album deal with Sub Pop, which at the time was contemplating a distribution deal (ultimately declined) with Sony Music. Encouraged by Soundgarden's

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manager Susan Silver, the group flew to L.A., secured the services of an attorney and began getting courted by major labels—"MCA, Charisma, Capitol, Island, DGC, the whole ball of wax," as Novoselic puts it. DGC eventually won the nod, mostly because New York noisemeisters Sonic Youth, with whom Nirvana had toured, already had a home there.

Around the time of the signing, Cobain and Novoselic, who had been making do with fill-in drummers (including the Melvins' Crover and Mudhoney's Danny Peters), secured the services of Grohl, a member of the Washington, D.C. band Scream and no stranger to punk campaigns himself. With Scream, Grohl explains, "we were staying in this house in Laurel Canyon with three mud-wrestling girls for a week-and-a-half; we had two shows booked, and the guarantees were like for a hundred dollars a show. Then our bass player's girlfriend wired him $800 over the telephone, and he disappeared. He flew back to D.C.—end of band."

On the advice of mutual friend Buzz Osborne, Grohl flew to Seattle to play with Nirvana: "All I really had was a suitcase and my drums, anyway, so I took them up to Seattle and hoped it would work. It did."

Nirvana cut *Nevermind* in early '91 with Butch Vig, producer of such sub-rosa bands as Killdozer and the Laughing Hyenas. The record was made as a pure punk-rock maneuver, loud and subversive. Mischievously, the group buried a bonus song "Endless Nameless" some 14 minutes into the last CD track (its feedback grind has probably awakened many an unsuspecting dozer). Some of the punk gambits are more elusive; the lovely acoustic ballad "Polly," for instance, docu-

Piano-Wired

CHRIS NOVOSELIC plays "old '70s Gibson basses," uses an Ampeg 400T head driven through two 2x15 MESA/Boogie cabinets, and plucks Rotosound RS66 extra-long strings.

DAVE GROHL pounds Tama drums ("not exclusively, because I haven't been asked to") and utilizes Remo heads, with an Aquarian head on the snare. He prefers cymbals "that can take a beating," usually Zildjians.

KURT COBAIN's instrument specs are somewhat out of the ordinary. "Well, I play whatever guitar is cheap. I prefer Fender Mustangs, but they're hard to find in left-handed versions. I play whatever I can find, whatever's cheap or whatever's left-handed. I have a MESA/Boogie preamp. I use four Crown 800-watt power sources. A Radio Shack burglar alarm. I use a Roland DS-1 distortion box, an Electro-harmonix Small Stone.

"I use piano wire for the guitar strings, 'cause it's a lot thicker," Cobain says with a straight face. "I buy it bulk, in these big long tubes, and just cut it to the length of the guitar. They're thicker than the thickest guitar gauge that's available. I don't know what the thickness of 'em is anymore—I can't remember. I use a really thick E string, and then a smaller size A. A few of the others are guitar strings—I think I use Dean Markleys, because they're the cheapest."

ments a rape from the rapist's dispassionate point of view.

Explaining his motives, lyricist Cobain says, "I think the reason 'Polly,' in particular, has such impact is because it could be considered a Top 40 song, a very simple, easy-listening song, with acoustic guitar and harmonies. But I decided to put some disturbing lyrics in, just to counteract that and make that the statement—that the song *should not be* that kind of song."

"Polly" was inspired by Cobain's views on the oppression of women. Other songs, such as the almost equally unnerving "Lithium," are closer to home: "It's another story that I made up, but I did infuse some of my personal experiences, like breaking up with girlfriends and having bad relationships, feeling that death void that the person in the song is feeling—very lonely, sick."

Beyond the irony-laced lyrics and the harpoon-sized melodic hooks of such stormers as "In Bloom" and "Stay Away," one carries away from *Nevermind* the blunt, car-smoking punk-rock roil that is at the core of both the band and its music. Rarely has such an infernally loud band scaled the charts so quickly. But Cobain suggests that such music—punk rock, underground, alternative, whatever you label it—will continue to gain commercial clout, the result of an unlikely rapprochement with standard-issue hard rock and metal.

"Seems like this hard rock and underground rock is fusing together and being thrown into this one melting pot. It's being considered as almost the same thing. I've noticed a lot of the cock-rock bands—Poison, stuff like that—in interviews, and in the image they're to portray with their new records, the tougher, meaner street attitude, and in meet-and-greets backstage with other alternative bands, that they're trying, not necessarily to jump on the wagon, but to make it seem as if they're cool and hip—accepting it.

"So they're role models, whether you like that idea or not, and the people who like their music are listening to what they have to say. And they're listening to the new bands that they're supporting, these supposed 'alternative' bands. There are a lot of really mainstream bands who sound just like Poison or resemble Poison very much, and *they're* being promoted as alternative bands. I find that really offensive, you know. I think one of the biggest examples of that would be Pearl Jam. They're going to be the first type of band to say that they're 'alternative' and then accept the Poison bands as much as the Poison bands are going to accept them. They're going to be the ones responsible for this corporate, alternative and cock-rock fusion."

But isn't Nirvana just as much a part of the corporate meatgrinder as any other hard-rock bands currently marketed by major record labels? "The only way I can describe 'alternative' anymore is 'good music,'" Cobain says. "I don't care what it sounds like—I don't care if it's abrasive or clean or retarded. It doesn't matter anymore. I mean, there are so many bad bands and so many bad songwriters out there that the only alternative to bad music is good music. And that's very rare."

"What we're doing does have a mission," Novoselic suggests. "And the mission is to break things open for other bands in the underground. Basically, to give people a chance to see there's a lot of good music there."

THE HIGHER THE PERFORMANCE

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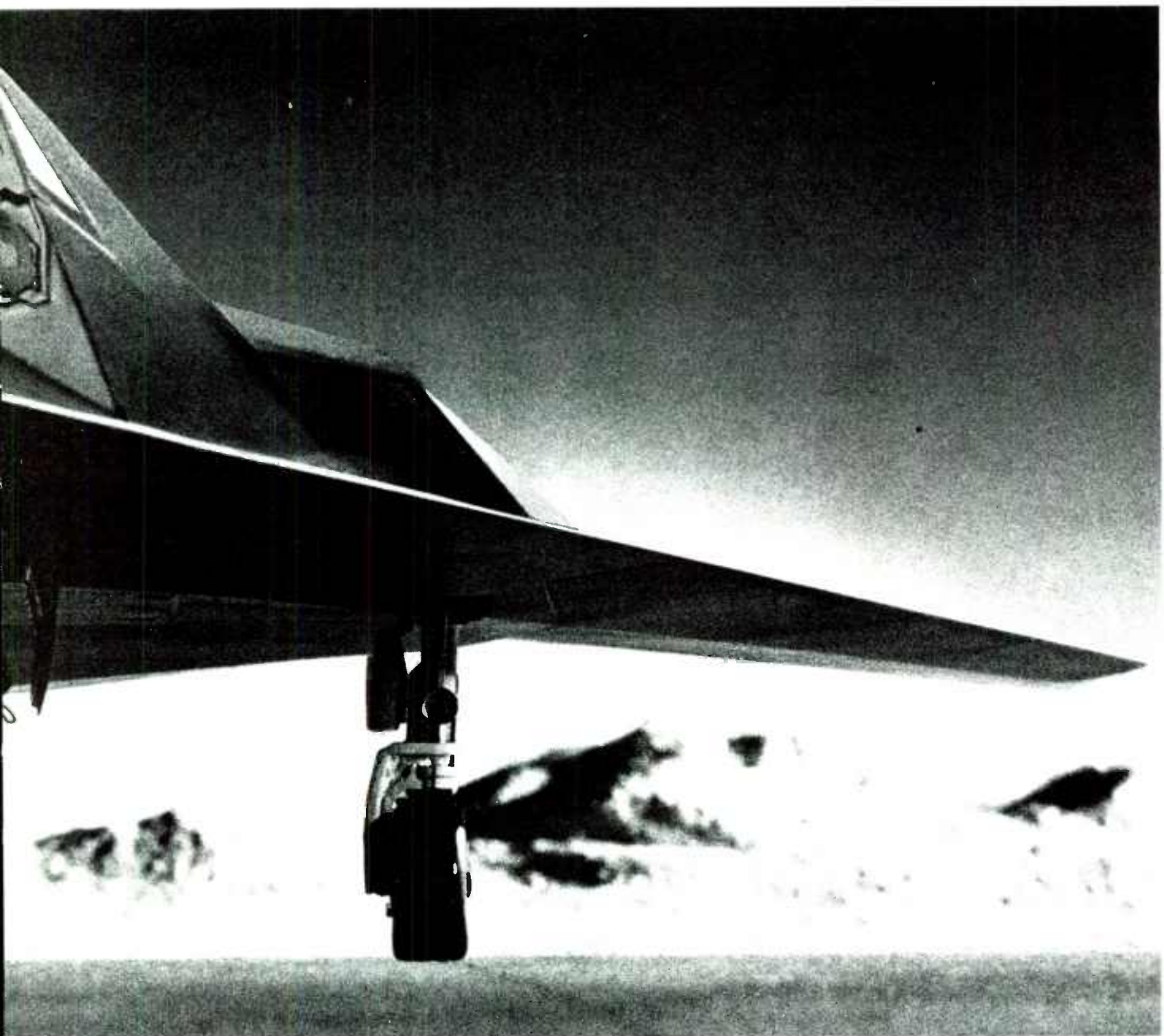

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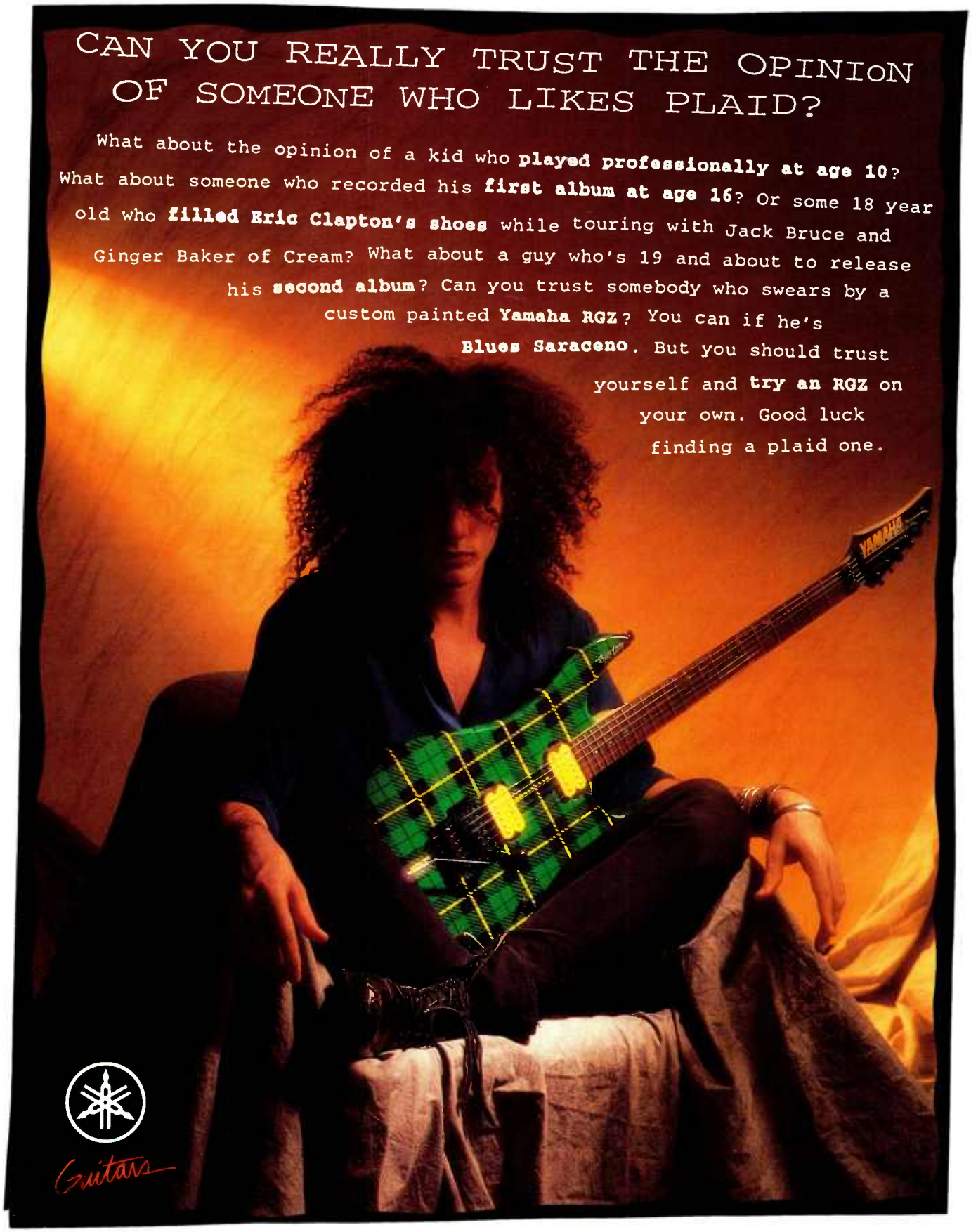


Guitars

BIG DEALS

How Money Fever is Changing the Music Business

BY FRED GOODMAN

In March of 1985 the band was broke. People were selling their houses. The IRS was calling *every day*."

Tim Collins lets out a sigh. The Boston-based manager doesn't have to look too far back to see rock bottom. But he'd much rather look ahead: The group he's talking about—Aerosmith—recently signed one of the most lucrative recording contracts in music business history.

Insiders say the four-album deal with Sony Music's Columbia label includes $13.5 million in advances—$6 million for new product and an additional $7.5 million for the continued use of their old Columbia catalog. The group's royalty rate is said to be approximately 25 percent of each recording's wholesale price, one of the highest ever. They will also reportedly receive a $5 million royalty advance on each album.

Aerosmith's deal is the latest in a flood of new signings raising the high-tide mark for superstar income. Aside from Aerosmith, there have been eye-opening (and vault-opening) new contracts in the last few months for both Michael and Janet Jackson and Mötley Crüe. And the forecast is for more of the same: At press time, PolyGram had begun serious negotiations to sign the Rolling Stones; Madonna was talking about a new deal with the heads of Time-Warner; and ZZ Top—a Warner Bros. mainstay for much of the '80s—were said to be on the verge of becoming free agents.

"Phenomenal" is the word Collins uses to describe industry interest in the particulars of Aerosmith's deal. "I've been called by virtually every rock manager," he says. Equally phenomenal is that Aerosmith seemed down-for-the-count just six years ago. And happy as Collins is about the money, there's something he says he's even happier about: By paying Aerosmith so much, Columbia has cemented the group's superstar status.

"As good as the money and the points are," says Collins, "that's not what it's about. The bottom line is that this validates the band as being in that small, all-time category."

That "small, all-time category" isn't looking too exclusive these days: Janet Jackson—who has exactly two hit albums under her belt—recently moved to Virgin in a deal which industry sources say is worth $50 million and the singer's management has claimed is even more lucrative; Mötley Crüe, one of the most popular acts on Time-Warner's Elektra label but hardly a lock for the all-time-greats list, has re-upped for

Photograph: Karen Miller

what is said to be $25 million paid across four albums.

Collins' assertion that this kind of blockbuster contract "validates" the band shows something besides money is being doled out by the truckload in these deals: hype. Aerosmith now has a record company saying the band is on a par with the Rolling Stones. Siblings Janet and Michael Jackson can engage in a public display of fiscal rivalry.

Labels also stand to gain from exaggerating the value and importance of their new trophies. "It comes down to buying paintings on the wall," Irving Azoff, president of Giant Records, says of talent shopping sprees. Indeed, Virgin chairman Richard Branson actually compared signing Janet Jackson to buying a Rembrandt when he bagged the singer last spring. One can only hope he was talking about the *group* the Rembrandts.

Hype aside, Columbia better hope that Aerosmith really is a timeless act: In addition to forking over a ton of money for them, Columbia is going to have to wait a long time to get the band. Aerosmith still owes two more studio albums and a greatest hits collection to its current label, Geffen Records. It could easily be six years before Aerosmith gives Columbia its first album—and at that point lead vocalist Steven Tyler will be closing in on 50.

That's no knock on Tyler—personally and professionally his comeback has been more than convincing. But the members of Aerosmith may be collecting Social Security checks before they complete this deal—and that speaks volumes about how much power proven talent has in today's market. Says one manager: "If you're hot, you're in the driver's seat."

"When you hear that your record company has been sold for 20 or 30 times its earnings you think, 'I want a piece of that.'"

It wasn't so long ago that an artist was tied to his label for life. Ten-album deals were the standard for new artists well into the '70s, and today's terms for an artist walking in off the street aren't much better. Most labels still guarantee just one or two albums, while insisting on options for six or seven more should the artist succeed.

Long-term contracts have been key for the record companies. Walter Yetnikoff, the former head of Sony's record operation, once remarked that "Steven Spielberg will make a film for whatever studio he likes tomorrow. I have had Barbra Streisand under contract for longer than she would like me to tell you."

But the old systems that prevented artists from maximizing their value are eroding: cash advances and royalties continue to rise and several of the industry's most cherished accounting practices—such as paying royalties on just 85 percent of all product and deducting 25 percent for packaging costs—are being sidestepped.

"When it comes to superstar deals, there are no walls," says attorney Michael Sukin. "These things are irrelevant in a mega-deal because you're basically throwing out the standard contract and saying, 'What kind of deal do you want to make?'"

Labels have been careful to circumvent rather than discard the standard contract. One reason is the presence of "favored nation" clauses in the contracts of many artists, which would force labels to give whatever concessions they make in a new superstar deal to those other artists. But that hasn't been a hindrance to superstars and their attorneys. Most are less concerned with the particular deductions and accounting practices labels use than they are with getting the dollar-figure they have in mind.

"It all comes down to the penny-rate per album," says attorney John Branca, who has negotiated deals for the Rolling Stones, Michael and Janet Jackson and the Traveling Wilburys. "Nobody cares how you get there." Recalls attorney Don Engel: "When I negotiated Boston's contract with MCA, there was no form. I just told MCA, 'I want you to compute it to a penny-rate.'" As for the standard deductions, Engel just scoffs. "You've got to be a moron not to know it doesn't cost $4 to package this stuff," he says.

Still, the question remains why the balance of power has shifted so dramatically in favor of the artists. The short answer is that proven talent is a rare and valuable commodity.

Aside from the obvious revenues they can generate, big-name acts can be a magnet for other talent: The enormous cachet Columbia enjoys as the label of Bob Dylan reportedly helped them land Bruce Springsteen and Billy Joel; similarly, Guns N' Roses is said to have wanted to sign with Geffen because that's where Aerosmith was. Peter Wolf, the former vocalist with the J. Geils Band, has recounted how when he and Jon Landau—now Bruce Springsteen's manager but then a Boston-based music critic—sat down with Atlantic president Jerry Wexler in 1970 to discuss the band's first contract, they didn't argue about publishing or royalty rates. The only thing Wolf remembers being adamant about was that the band had to be on Atlantic rather than the more rock-oriented Atco. Why? Atlantic had been Ray Charles' label.

Okay, no one ever said musicians were smart businessmen. But there's no doubt superstar deals are getting smarter and smarter. And one of the biggest factors affecting talent prices is the astronomical prices paid over the last couple of years for record companies.

In recent years entertainment and hardware companies have

Photographs: Chuck Pulin/Starfile

Mötley Crüe's Piece of the Action

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DECADE MAKES. "WHEN WE STARTED," MÖTLEY Crüe singer Vince Neil recalls, "we were so naive about the business that our first manager signed us to a 10-year contract with power of attorney—for a crisp $100 bill. Fortunately, there's a law in California against signing [management contracts] for more than seven years. But I'd never seen a $100 bill before. I felt like, 'Yeah, we made it!'"

These days, Neil and his musical partners can afford to laugh—or to do just about anything else. With one successful *Decade of Decadence* under their collective belts, a sharper, sophisticated and decidedly more sober Mötley Crüe is well poised for the next, having recently agreed to a four-record, $25 million deal with Elektra Records.

"When we first hit, I remember looking at the bands I grew up with, like Kiss and Ted Nugent, and seeing that they all had about a five- or six-year run in terms of the big bucks," notes Crüe's bassist and most prolific songwriter, Nikki Sixx. "Now that we're still here, it feels odd."

Even odder, perhaps, to the staff of Elektra, a label once renowned for sensitive types like Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt and the Eagles, but whose offices are now adorned with photos of Jane's Addiction, Metallica and the Crüe. "They used to lock their doors when we'd walk into the offices," Neil laughs. "Now it's 'Hey, how are you guys doing?' You have to build a track record, sell albums consistently...then they're willing to negotiate big deals like this one. It tells you they have a positive outlook."

With good reason. Mötley Crüe's last four albums have sold at least four million copies each. The most recent, *Dr. Feelgood*, moved over 5.5 million and was cited by many observers as their best record to date. Having hit the big time as teenagers, the original quartet—which also includes drummer Tommy Lee and guitarist Mick Mars—remains relatively young, and has already survived a decade in which "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll" frequently served as an accurate listing of band priorities. Now, following well-publicized detoxifications and other signs of burgeoning maturity (Sixx and Neil recently became fathers, for instance), the Crüe appears to be hitting its musical stride.

In the world of rock 'n' roll, these are credentials for a AAA bond rating. "Elektra really wanted to re-sign us, to be able to say, 'We had this band throughout their career,'" Sixx says. "To be honest, that wasn't as important to us. But Elektra knows how we tick. They know how to stay out of our bedroom—meaning the music. The president of another company offered us $30 million, and they started talking about how we might want 'creative control' clauses in the contract. But with Elektra, we've always had creative control, without ever having to write it into a contract."

"We've always had a good relationship with them—partly because we always kept a distance," Neil adds. "A lot of record companies take charge of a band's career, decide what the video's gonna look like, choose the single...with us, it's always been the four bandmembers. We figure if we screw it up, we can just blame ourselves."

Rife with tales of personal recklessness, the group's history also suggests a surprisingly shrewd sense of purpose. "We learned early on that the best way to do things was put what you have back into the band," Neil says. "If we got $150 for playing the Troubadour, we'd take $100 and point our risers or get posters for the next gig. Now we have Mötley Records, we bought a studio which we can rehearse or rent out...we're bigger now, but that's still our theory today."

When they first descended on an L.A. scene infatuated with new-wave confections like the Go-Gos and the Knack, the Crüe's glam-rock trappings and visual stage stunts (chainsawing mannequins, Tommy Lee setting Sixx on fire, etc.) seemed motley indeed. "Guys in the business would say to us, 'You don't fit,'" Sixx remembers. "And we were like, 'This is rock 'n' roll. Why would you want us to fit?'" Even after signing with Elektra, the band was given free rein to fashion its image, "because no one knew what to do with us, and no one expected us to do anything. We knew that only our fans would like what we did—so why not take it over the top? That's when the makeup started, and the [*cont'd on page 52*]

Photograph of Vince Neil & wife Sharise: Karen Miller

THE RAG TRADE

Making Millions in Merchandising

FOR MUSICIANS WHO HOPE TO TURN A BUCK SELLING MERCHANdise—T-shirts, tour programs, posters and the like—your best bet is playing rock 'n' roll that the teenage guys will devour or dance-pop that the little girls understand. Those audiences represent the most lucrative markets in the booming tour souvenir business. Not only do teenagers flock to concerts, they want to proclaim their pop allegiances with the shirts on their back.

As one merchandising exec quips, "What adult in his right mind would pay 25 bucks for a T-shirt?"

Plenty of kids do, of course, helping to drive the tour merchandising business to the tune of $500 million a year in gross income, according to one estimate. T-shirts account for 80 percent of those sales. And more than one-quarter of that cash goes right into the artists' pockets in royalties and licensing fees.

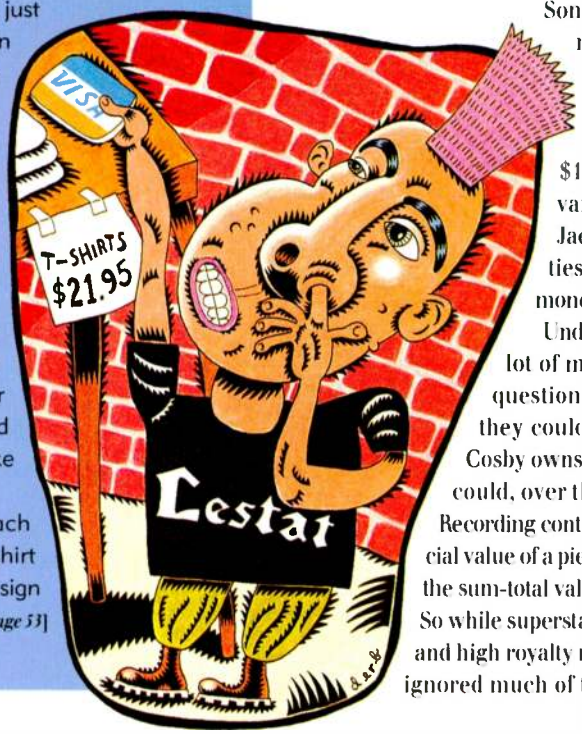
New Kids on the Block, the souvenir success story of 1990, sold $30 million in merchandise at their shows, an average of $9 per ticket buyer, according to an estimate by the *Licensing Letter*, an industry newsletter. The Kids' superstar royalty rate likely gave them a third or more of that bounty. Pop-metal stars Bon Jovi, on their last tour, may have netted more from the T-shirt till than from the box office. Their fans spent $10 to $13 each at souvenir stands, at venues holding 10,000 to 50,000 kids.

Those are numbers that make the music business sit up and take notice.

"For a long time, merchandising was the bastard child of the business," says Alvin Ross, managing director with Nice Man Merchandising, one of the four dominant companies in the field, along with Brockum, Winterland and Great Southern. "It used to be, 'Oh, this is just the T-shirt guy.' Well, the T-shirt guy in 1991 is the guy who puts the act on the road. We're the difference between whether the act makes or loses money on the road."

That may be a bit of an exaggeration, but there is no question merchandising companies are an important source of advance cash for acts heading out on tour. If a merchandising company fails to recoup its funds from a group's share of the souvenir sales, it usually takes the loss—and waits for the next road trip to make money back.

Although few club tours reach enough fans to turn a profit on T-shirt sales, even up-and-coming acts can sign with one of the major mer- [*cont'd on page 53*]



shelled out literally billions of dollars to acquire labels. PolyGram spent over $750 million to acquire A&M and Island; MCA bought Geffen Records for $545 million; EMI paid Charles Koppelman and his partners $285 million for their publishing operation and to start SBK Records.

Those big-money deals finally turned heads on Wall Street and in the financial press. After years of pretending the record business didn't exist—the 1988 sale of the world's largest record company and the biggest library of American music, CBS Records, to Japan's Sony Corp., didn't even make the front page of the *New York Times*—they were suddenly very impressed by the personal fortunes being amassed by the likes of David Geffen and Koppelman, both of whom gained a celebrity on the financial pages to rival anything their artists were getting in the arts and entertainment sections. The newfound high profile of rock's moguls, while good for the ego, is probably bad for business: Artists are seeing the value of their work in a new light. "When you hear that your record company has been sold for 20 or 30 times its earnings you think, 'I want a piece of that,'" says Aerosmith's Collins.

Indeed, the rumor around the industry was that Aerosmith's move could be traced back to the sale of Geffen Records. Although Collins won't comment, sources say Aerosmith asked the label to reimburse them for video and touring expenses after the MCA windfall; Geffen reportedly responded by asking the band to extend their deal. Instead, Aerosmith tested the market.

The sale of so many labels for so much money has also made the artists realize that they are a large part of the overall value of the record companies—and that that hasn't been factored into previous contract negotiations.

Traditionally, recording contracts pay the artist a set amount of the sale price of a recording. Before working on an album, the artist receives an advance against future royalties. The bigger the artist, the bigger the royalty and the bigger the advance. Signing bonuses, like the $6 million paid to Aerosmith, are generally non-recoupable against future sales, i.e., they are free and clear and will not be subtracted from future royalties. Prior to signing his recent deal with Sony, Michael Jackson's old arrangement with the company was said to include an $18 million-per-album advance, of which $3 million was non-recoupable. The remaining $15 million was essentially an advance against future earnings and Jackson would not receive any royalties until the company earned all that money back.

Undoubtedly, superstars were getting a lot of money under those formulas. The question is, were they really getting what they could? By comparison, comedian Bill Cosby owns a piece of his television show and could, over the show's life, earn $600 million. Recording contracts deal largely with the commercial value of a piece of product—the record—and not the sum-total value of the artist's catalog and career. So while superstars might have gotten big advances and high royalty rates, their deals have traditionally ignored much of the value inherent in their work.

Illustration: John Buckderf

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"You're not getting asset value under those contracts," says attorney Sukin. "You're getting a buck."

It's clear that executives working the corporate side of the table recognize these variables in negotiating their own contracts: When Sony hired Jon Peters and Peter Guber to run Columbia Pictures, the duo insisted that if Columbia was sold, they would receive a percentage of any profit. The message was "we are creating and bringing value to this company—we deserve a piece of that beyond our salary and bonuses." If Jon Peters, an executive who didn't last 18 months at Columbia Pictures, can get that kind of deal from Sony, why can't Michael Jackson?

In fact, Jackson's new contract with Sony does break some ground. Although the press spent a lot of time helping the company stroke Jackson's ego by printing Sony Music president Tommy Mottola's misleading assertion that the deal was "worth" $1 billion—an assertion that only seemed to further whet the contractual appetites of other artists, managers and attorneys—it has a profit-sharing feature that should raise the eyebrows of every superstar manager. In return for taking less money upfront, Jackson and Sony have essentially become partners.

Sources say that where Jackson once received an $18 million advance for each album, he now receives $5 million. His royalty rate remains about what it's been for much of the '80s—approximately 25 percent of the wholesale price, or about $2.70 a CD—one of the best in the industry. What he gets in return for giving up some of his advance is a piece of the profits beyond his royalty. Sources say that after deductions of distribution fees and costs, Jackson will receive half of the profits that normally go to the record company. Those sources estimate Jackson will have to sell over 10 million copies of an album worldwide for the profit-sharing to kick in. Considering his previous track record, Jackson has a reasonable shot at hitting the magic number.

There are additional bells and whistles on Jackson's deal—his own label, Nation, for producing other artists, and a film production

Who's the Richest of Them All?

The Top Ten

IT'S VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR AN OUTSIDER TO COMPUTE HOW MUCH MONEY A ROCK ACT MAKES ON THE ROAD. PERCENTAGES, TICKET PRICES, guarantees and overheads all vary from tour to tour, and may even vary within a tour. Add to that the fact that artists can make millions of dollars on their merchandising—which is a cash business—and you can see just how difficult it is, even using guesstimates.

Recording contracts are another story. While almost everyone talks up their deal and likes to show off a big advance, contracts remain private transactions and specific details are hard to verify. That said, we believe from our discussions with industry insiders that these artists currently receive the highest royalty and compensation packages from labels:

1. **Michael Jackson**
2. **Aerosmith**
3. **Rolling Stones**
4. **Janet Jackson**
5. **Bruce Springsteen**
6. **Mötley Crüe**
7. **Fleetwood Mac**
8. **Crosby, Stills & Nash**
9. **Prince**
10. **U2**

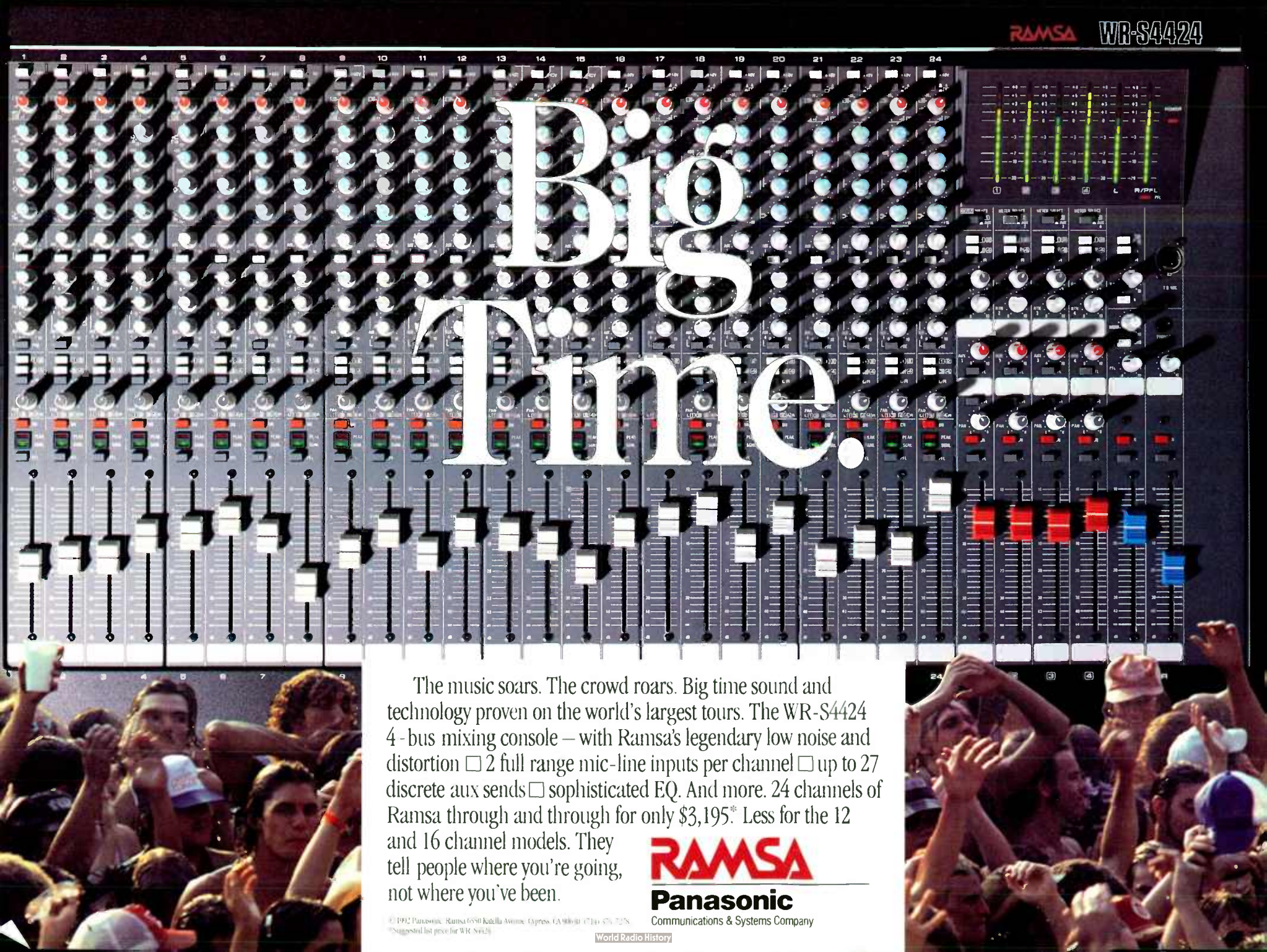
The range of royalty points from best to worst is 25-to-19 percent. But comparisons are difficult because labels have different accounting methods. Sony pays a percentage based on wholesale prices (about $10.35 for a CD, $5.80 for a cassette), while the Time-Warner labels figure their royalties as a percentage of the retail list prices (usually $15.98 and $9.98 respectively). As a rule, all labels deduct 25 percent off the top for packaging costs. And also as a rule, labels only pay royalties on 85 percent of what they sell—the other 15 percent is generally set aside as defects and free goods. Sony, however, is willing to pay superstars on 100 percent of what they sell (they still take the packaging deduction, though).

Still with us? Okay, let's say you're a garden-variety Warner Bros. superstar like Madonna and get an 18 percent royalty rate. A CD's retail price is roughly $16. Subtract 25 percent for packaging. That leaves $12, of which you get 18 percent, or roughly $2.25 on 85 percent of the CDs you sell. After paying recording and other expenses once Sire has recouped your advance, you will receive $1.9 million for every million CDs you sell. Not a bad day's work.

If you're Michael Jackson or Aerosmith and receiving an adjusted rate of 25 percent, it's even sweeter because you'll be paid on 100 percent, not 85 percent. And don't forget catalog sales: They may not be getting the same royalty rate, but those numbers are always brought back to the table whenever a new deal is cut. Add in non-recoupable advances like the $6 million Aerosmith got, and you can see why Steven Tyler still manages to get out of bed in the morning.

—Fred Goodman

Photographs (left to right): Alex Berliner/Visages; Ulf Magnusson/MWA; Neal Preston/Outline; Dimo Safari; Visages



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The Pirate Looks at $6.9 Million

JIMMY BUFFETT DOESN'T HAVE HITS—BUT HE'S A TOP CONCERT DRAW

IT WAS A SOLD-OUT SUMMER NIGHT AT THE STARWOOD AMPHITHEATRE outside Nashville and a record-setting crowd of more than 17,000 had turned out to hear Jimmy Buffett & the Coral Reefer Band change latitudes and attitudes in the middle of a rainstorm.

Such fan loyalty comes as no surprise to promoters and venue operators, who cite Buffett as one of the most consistently successful acts on the tour scene. Buffett makes money on the road, but not by playing 50, 100 or 200 dates a year. More like one, two or three dozen is Buffett's fill. His shows are routed largely through the growing U.S. circuit of amphitheaters like the Starwood. Those venues pay top dollar to compete for artists during their short, warm-weather season when it's too hot for Buffett to stay home in Key West anyway.

Through the first half of 1991, Buffett played 14 shows grossing $3.9 million, according to *Amusement Business*. He topped $6.9 million in ticket sales in just 30 shows in 1990, the trade magazine reports. Typically, an act of Buffett's status will command 85 percent of the ticket gross, after splitting expenses with the promoter. That's close to $200,000 a show.

"What he does right is touring only in the summertime," says veteran New York promoter Ron Delsener, who has booked Buffett year after year. "He's a perennial." Just as the Grateful Dead draws hordes of ticket-buying Deadheads, Buffett brings in his loyalists—Parrotheads. Promoters point not only to Buffett's appeal as an entertainer but his savvy as a businessman.

"He's very prudent," says Steve Moore, executive director of the Starwood, who notes that Buffett offers colorful production at his shows but doesn't need 10 trucks filled with stage equipment to do so. What's more, a multi-year sponsorship deal with Corona beer helps underwrite Buffett's costs. But here's the catch: While Buffett has drawn tens of thousands of fans to his shows for the past several years, he hasn't hit the Top 40 in more than a decade and his last album to go platinum was the 1985 best-of collection *Songs You Know by Heart*.

"He is one of the great enigmas of popular music," says Nashville writer Bob Oermann. "There's something totally screwy about a record business that can't sell product on an artist that draws so phenomenally well."

—Thom Duffy

arrangement with Sony's Columbia Pictures—but they appear designed to stimulate Jackson's ego rather than his wallet and it's unlikely anything will come of them. The key question in his new deal is whether he was right to bet on his continued success. In order to maximize this deal, he has to continue to be one of the world's best-selling artists. In fairness to Jackson, the deal shows he is confident about his own abilities: A lot of artists prefer front-loaded contracts that give them a lot of money when they sign. Says attorney Branca: "The general rule is grab everything you can. Because if you're hot later, you're gonna go back and renegotiate anyway."

While a big album has traditionally been all the leverage an artist needs to upgrade his contract, renegotiation has taken on a certain frenzy in recent years. Still, some labels are more amenable than others: CBS/Sony has a reputation for keeping big artists happy by sweetening their deals; Warner Bros. is known for making artists live with their contracts. In any event, renegotiation usually isn't without its price for the artist: Labels frequently make extended options a component of any new contract. The artist is getting more money, but now has to deliver more albums. As a result, true free agents are a rarity.

When there have been superstar free agents, they have gotten top-of-the-market deals. R.E.M., Bob Dylan, Elton John, Paul Simon, the Rolling Stones and Paul McCartney all opted to fulfill their contracts and test their own value on the open market rather than renegotiate contracts—and all struck deals that, at the time, were considered high.

More recently, Janet Jackson left A&M for Virgin in a deal reportedly worth $30 million. As high as that seems—especially for an artist who doesn't write her own material and owes a tremendous amount of her success to her producers—it hasn't fazed some executives.

"It's minute compared to what people have paid for labels," says Giant's Azoff. "It gives intrinsic value to Virgin for them to add Janet Jackson. Look, if I was going to do an acquisition, this might be smarter. For five percent of what it would cost to acquire A&M, I've taken their biggest act. And who knows? I might break even."

Still, if Azoff is unfazed, he's also unimpressed. Having signed Elton John and Boston while he ran MCA, Azoff has kept Giant out of the superstar bidding, largely because he isn't seeing anyone he likes at a price he likes. "Lionel Richie is trying to fight his way off Motown," says Azoff. "He hasn't had an album in like eight years and the last one sold a third of what the one before it sold. And *he's* out there bidding."

The industry probably won't have to wait long to see the next big deal for a desirable free agent: Sources say ZZ Top is, with the exception of a greatest hits album, free and clear of their deal with Warner Bros. That doesn't mean Warners won't be able to entice them to stay where they are: Elektra recently re-signed Mötley Crüe to what is said to be a four-album deal worth $25 million.

If proven talent is a scarce commodity, there are other factors increasing its value. Several of the major labels have for years pursued a philosophy of buying market share with little regard for its cost. You can't really say that it's worked very well—PolyGram certainly has a much bigger piece of the market than it did in the mid-'70s when it decided to pursue a course of expansion at any cost, but

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it's still slugging it out for the number three or four slot. Yet buying security through market share is still attractive to labels—many believe a reduced profit share is secondary to having a big piece of the market. And that plays right into the hands of the artists.

"If you're the record company and you don't have Bruce Springsteen, what is it worth to you to have him?" asks one manager. "How much of the profit are you prepared to give up? If 40 percent of the defined net profit is what you have been willing to pay out, doesn't it make sense to make it 80 percent and get the 20 percent of a superstar that you wouldn't otherwise have?"

Of course, those profit margins would be much better were the record company able to have the hits they need without signing superstars. If a new artist is getting a 12 percent royalty and a superstar is getting 25 percent, the record company obviously stands to make a lot more money on a comparable hit by a new artist. But if the name of the game is market share rather than profitability, then who cares what you spend?

The Aerosmith deal also illustrates how a large record company

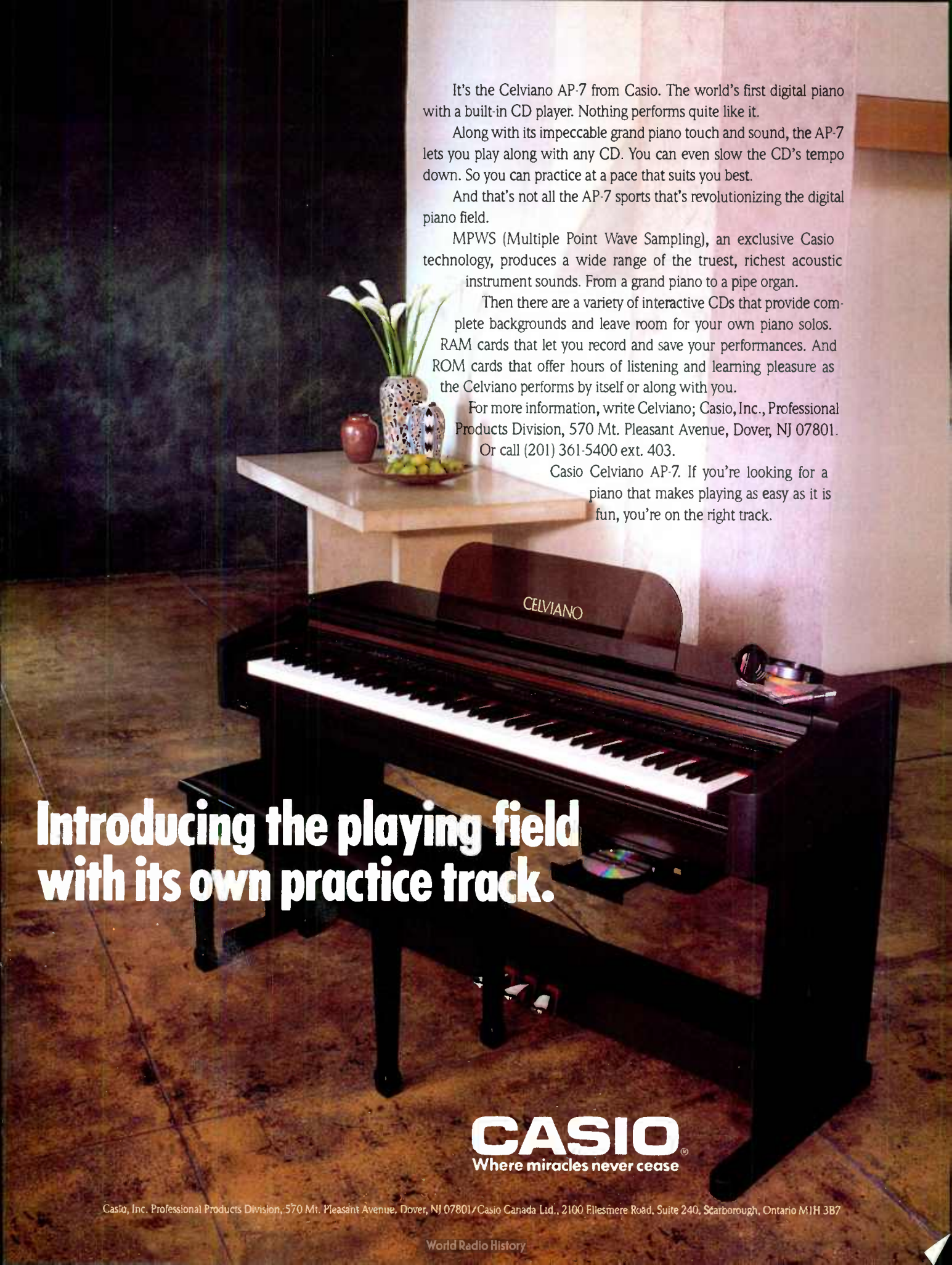
When Things Go Wrong

Dubious Superdeals

THE DEAL	THE DISAPPOINTMENT	THE DEFENSE
ROLLING STONES Signed to Columbia in 1983 for a reported $25–28 million (twice what the group was offered by Atlantic, their label since 1971). At the time, CBS was swollen with success, profits for the first half of '83 were up 300 percent over the same period in '82. "This is the other living legend," said CBS Records president Walter Yetnikoff, the first being the Beatles, defunct for 13 years. (Paul McCartney had just finished a five-year, $20-million-plus CBS deal that reportedly lost the label $9 million.) At the time, a CBS source said of the Stones deal, "Some people here are saying it's a prestige move more than anything."	*Dirty Work* sold 1 million-plus, then the band split up for a while. Mick Jagger cut two solo albums: *She's the Boss*, which did merely okay, peaking at #12, and *Primitive Cool*, which sold terribly, peaking at #41 and moving less than 500,000 units. Reuniting for '89's *Steel Wheels*, the band moved 2 million units (not especially impressive, given the huge publicity surrounding the tour). *Flashpoint* peaked at #16 in 1991—the band's worst showing ever for a new album. In November 1991, the Stones signed a deal with Virgin Records.	The deal brought CBS the Stones' catalog, from *Sticky Fingers* on, 14 albums that the label reissued, presumably very profitably, on CD. 
STEVE WINWOOD Signed with Virgin America in early 1987 for $12–14 million for three albums. Virgin America was brand-new, signing a superstar like Winwood was regarded by the label as essential to its credibility. 	*Roll with It*, Winwood's first Virgin album, went to #1 and sold 2 million copies. But three years later, *Refugees of the Heart* peaked at an anemic #27. (The *Refugees* tour averaged 7200 seats sold per show, down from 9200 for '88's tour.)	"It's easy to justify Winwood's signing," says a Virgin spokesperson: "counting international sales, he makes Virgin a lot of money." Virgin won't release either album's domestic or international sales.
ROBERT PALMER Signed to EMI Records USA in 1987 for $12 million and seven albums, not including 1988's *Heavy Nova*. Like Virgin America, EMI USA was a fledgling company, product of a merger between EMI America and Manhattan. "When the Palmer announcement was made," says Jim Cawley, EMI USA senior VP of marketing, "there was lots of enthusiasm about it—it helped us as a new company."	*Heavy Nova* sold a million units and went to #13, but its sequel, *Don't Explain*, did really poorly: 370,000 units and a *Billboard* peak of #88. The deal, wrote the *New York Times*, "seems headed for disaster." 	Says EMI's Cawley, "When you look at his track record, the number of hits he's had, you don't worry too much about the fact that his last album wasn't that big. True, the label's disappointed in the second album, but there isn't a label in the business that wouldn't want to have Palmer."
DAVID BOWIE Signed to EMI in 1983 for $3 million an album for seven albums. Looked like a great deal at the time; Bowie's a legendary talent and was a consistently large seller. EMI thought they could move 5 million units of the next Bowie album.	*Let's Dance* did well, peaking at #4; *Tonight* peaked at #11 and went platinum. *Never Let Me Down* in '87 did poorly, peaking at #34 and failing to sell a million. *Tin Machine*, in '89, sold 200,000, one of the biggest losers in EMI history. The deal was cancelled mutually, says EMI, in 1990 with three albums to go. The second Tin Machine album, made for JVC's Victory Music label, dropped completely off the charts after three weeks in '91 and looks like a thorough disaster.	"At the time," says Cawley, "it looked like a brilliant deal. Had you talked to EMI after the first album, it could have been justified all day long." 
 **DONNA SUMMER** Signed with Geffen and WEA International in 1980 for five albums at $3 million an album. At the time, Summer was one of the two biggest female recording artists in the business.	From selling double platinum on her late-'70s Casablanca albums, the disco queen dropped to 300,000–400,000 copies per album. She fulfilled her Geffen contract and was not re-signed.	"It put us on the map," says Geffen president Ed Rosenblatt. "Before we even opened our doors, we had Donna Summer and Elton John; everybody said, 'Oh boy, here's a new player.' That the [Summer] deal wasn't lucrative in the long run wasn't important. It served its purpose."

—Tony Scherman

Photographs (top to bottom): Gerardo Somoza/Outline; Bill Davila/Retna; Geoff Swaine (Palmer & Bowie); Kevin Mazur/LFI



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with deep pockets can spend money to cover its shortcomings. While the Warner-Elektra-Atlantic labels have had a good deal of success breaking hard rock acts over the last few years—most notably Guns N' Roses, Metallica, Mötley Crüe and Skid Row—Sony's Columbia and Epic labels have not gotten the job done. It isn't a lack of artistic talent or product: Epic has had good albums from bands like Living Colour and Suicidal Tendencies and Columbia has, in Midnight Oil, a band that should have been an international superstar on the order of U2. Chances are Midnight Oil's manager is as bald as singer Peter Garrett by now—having pulled out all his hair watching Columbia give Aerosmith 10 times what it would have cost to put his band over the top in America.

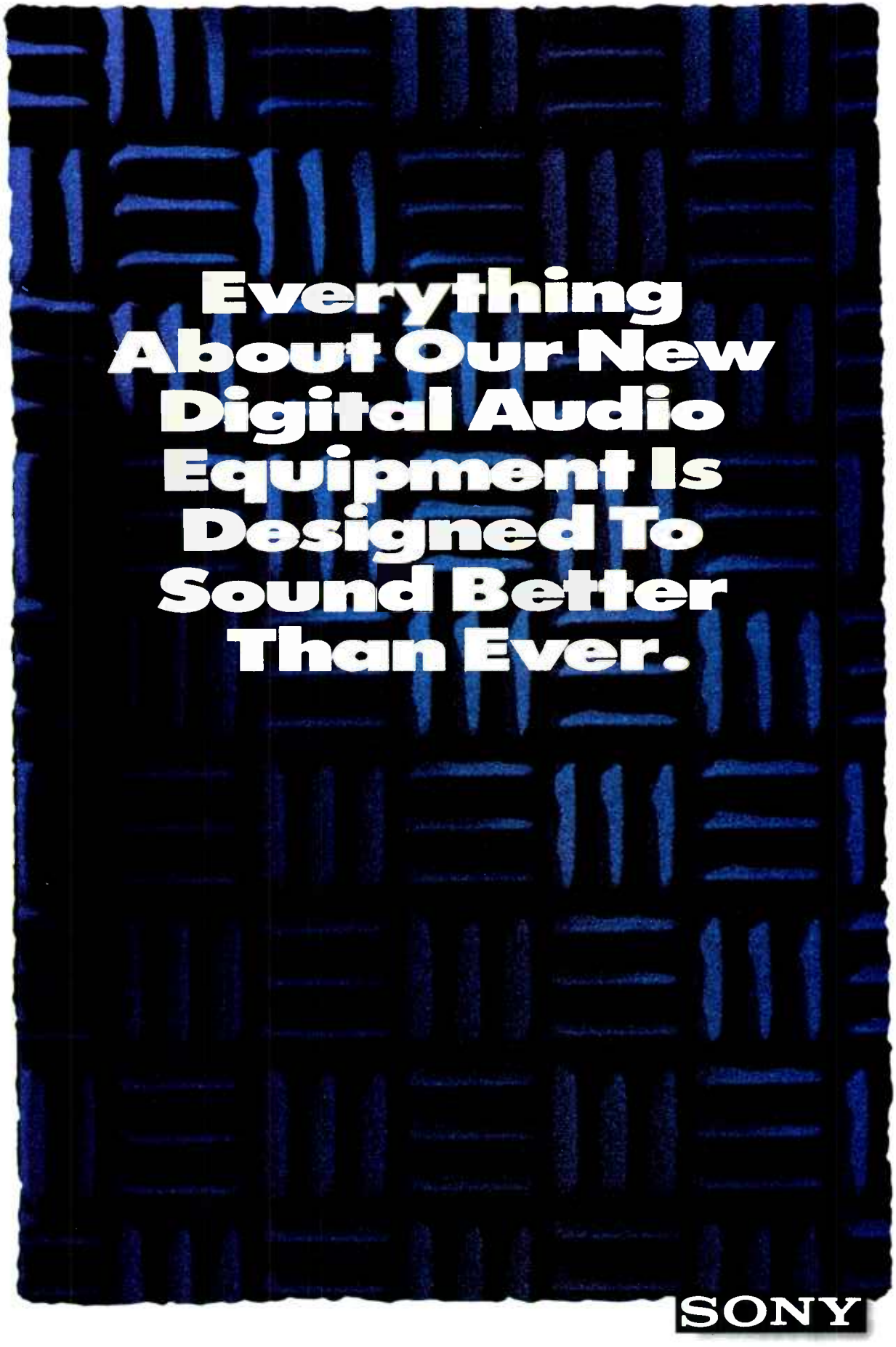
In its defense, management at Columbia can point to the fact that had they not signed Aerosmith, they probably would have lost the catalog of old Aerosmith albums the group recorded during its first tour of duty on the label from 1972 through 1985. Under their earlier Columbia deal, such strong-selling Aerosmith albums as *Aerosmith*, *Toys in the Attic* and *Get Your Wings* revert to the band and their former managers, Steve Lieber and David Krebs, after 20 years. The first album comes back to them in 1993—and they would be free to sell or lease it to any label they want. Catalogs are generally considered most valuable to an artist's current label because a new hit reinvigorates old titles; a label with both the current and past titles has a dual incentive to promote the artist—Columbia did particularly well with Springsteen's catalog during *Born in the USA*'s run, which lifted several old Springsteen albums into the *Billboard* Top 200. If another label had signed Aerosmith, the Columbia catalog would have most likely followed them.

Catalog has always been a silent earner, especially on hard-rock acts like Aerosmith. Several years ago a one-time Warner Bros. salesman confided that Led Zeppelin's back catalog continued to sell at a rate that virtually guaranteed several titles could be recertified gold *every six months*. And that was *before* CDs gave catalog titles a dramatic shot in the arm: Today, catalog is generally cited as accounting for 40 percent of all album sales.

The most interesting question might be, "Why did Columbia's management let Aerosmith have their catalog back?" Obviously whoever negotiated Columbia's 1972 deal with the band couldn't envision the future value of hard-rock catalogs or that the company would be paying a fortune to re-sign Aerosmith 20 years later. (By comparison, Atlantic not only continues to own the early Led Zeppelin albums, they also bought the quartet's music publishing at what has proven to be a steal.) Columbia's move is surprising because catalog is a bedrock asset for record companies, one they are rarely willing to give up for anyone other than superstars—and in 1972 Aerosmith certainly wasn't a superstar band.

The pop acts that Columbia sells best these days don't create catalogs as valuable as artists that may not sell particularly well upon release. Perhaps Michael Bolton (who also recently renegotiated his contract on the strength of back-to-back hit albums) is capable of growing into a strong catalog artist on the order of Billy Joel, but otherwise the future earning potential of Columbia's current money-makers doesn't look too bright: 15 years from now New Kids on the Block's catalog will probably not be a great asset.

The great irony of the Aerosmith deal is



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Second generation LSI's allow for high-speed 32-bit digital signal processing. And with its large graphic display and help button for assistance on any function, the DPS-D7 is always simple to use.

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

DYNAMIC RANGE: MORE THAN 94 dB

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 10 Hz-22 kHz

THD: <0.0035%

ANALOG I/O: BALANCED +4 dBs (+24 dBs MAX.), UNBALANCED –10 dBs (+10 dBs MAX.)

MEMORY CAPACITY: 100 FACTORY PRESETS, 256 USER LOCATIONS

PCM-2300

Studio DAT Recorder

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Plus, its analog and digital I/O's provide a wide range of flexible interfacing possiblities.

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

SIGNAL TO NOISE RATIO: MORE THAN 86 dB

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 20 Hz-20 kHz

THD: <0.05%

ANALOG I/O: +4 dBs (+24 dBs MAX.) ADJUSTABLE

SUPPLIED ACCESSORIES: WIRED/WIRELESS REMOTE, 19" RACK MOUNT, POWER AND REMOTE CABLES

DPS-R7

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It also includes 100 factory presets as well as 256 memory locations for your own presets. In addition, the DPS-R7 features an ingenious "data wheel" and large graphic display for easy operation.

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

DYNAMIC RANGE: MORE THAN 90 dB

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 10 Hz-18 kHz

THD: <0.004%

ANALOG I/O: BALANCED +4 dBs (+24 dBs MAX.), UNBALANCED –10 dBs (+10 dBs MAX).

MAXIMUM SIMULTANEOUS EFFECTS (TEN): 4 PRE EFFECTS (2 PER CHANNEL), 2 REVERB (1 PER CHANNEL), 4 POST EFFECTS (2 PER CHANNEL)

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The CDP-2700 compact disc player delivers a multitude of professional features for a very compact price.

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that the band was practically dead when they left Columbia in 1985 and now Columbia is buying them back at a premium because the label is practically dead as a hard-rock imprint. The group's artistic and commercial resurrection was accomplished with Geffen Records. And although Geffen is rumored to have made an eleventh-hour bid to keep Aerosmith, the label also convinced the band that they were willing to live without them.

"People have tried to say that I hate David Geffen," says Collins, who is quick to credit Geffen in the battle to bring the band back to life. "It's not true. How can you hate a guy you made $100 million with? I never had a fight with him, but David believed that the band was going to peak."

He doesn't have to believe in Aerosmith—he has Guns N' Roses. Geffen also has a company that knows how to sign, make and market hard-rock acts. Aerosmith is simply not as valuable to Geffen as they are to Sony.

Sony, as a foreign owner, may also be buying good will with some of its deals for high-profile artists. "There's a vulnerability of foreign owners," says one manager. "I think they're in a tough spot. Here comes an American icon, a Michael Jackson, say. You can just picture him making the appropriate comment—'Gee, I don't know what happened to my record company.' It would be devastating. The good will of the artist is a very powerful thing."

Foreign owners aren't the only ones who can be made to look bad. Time-Warner likes to feature Madonna's picture prominently in its annual report. And well the company should: Aside from their claim that she has sold over $500 million worth of records for Time-Warner worldwide, Madonna—having made herself one of the most recognized people in the world—is probably Time-Warner's most effective corporate symbol after Bugs Bunny.

Time-Warner chairman Steven J. Ross knows that the rabbit can't make him look bad. Madonna, on the other hand, could make his life miserable. Put yourself in Ross' shoes: You paid yourself approximately $200 million in bonuses on a deal that saddled Time-Warner with over $11 billion worth of debt. That has not made you very popular with your stockholders. Now tell them that you don't think it makes sense to sign Madonna for significantly less than you paid yourself.

Say what you like about Madonna as a singer or an actress—and you can say that her record sales have declined steadily since 1984's *Like a Virgin* and that she's turned in a mediocre performance at the box office—but that's not what this is about. Superstars like Madonna or Michael Jackson are starting to recognize that they are a keystone in a global business that didn't exist when they signed their first contracts. So now it's not just about music or even the number of records or concert tickets you can sell, but about fame and who has the highest profile to offer an international media giant struggling to put a human face on its far-flung operations. Madonna, who is in the business of being famous, can get massive media coverage for the opening of a can of coffee. *You* tell the Time-Warner shareholders that she's going to a competitor.

Ross and his co-chairman, Nick Nicholas, were personally involved in negotiations with Madonna and her representatives before those talks reportedly hit a snag. According to industry gossip, Time-Warner felt no real pressure to [*cont'd on page 97*]

[cont'd from page 41] tattoos, which almost no one had at the time. Now it's like, let's get tattoos and Harleys and start a band. But at the time, it got people to take notice."

Sixx says, "You could categorize us visually, and maybe image shouldn't be that important," he says, sounding almost rueful. "For a second I was worried it was all turning into Spinal Tap. But we'd taken a stance we believed in: We believed in sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll! We did the glam thing to piss people off. Now, at 32, I can't wear stacked heels and makeup and I don't want to. You have to keep changing, and sometimes you grow away from what is supposed to be cool. But what we've done has always had a bit of a rebellious stance."

Lately the band has elicited some grudging admiration from the press, largely on the basis of the musically taut *Dr. Feelgood*. What's been lagging, surprisingly, are offers for commercial endorsements. Neil, who races cars, complains that Toyota, which sponsors the Long Beach Grand Prix, won't let him race there because of his band's reputation.

"And isn't Budweiser sponsoring Huey Lewis' tour?" he asks rhetorically. "I love Huey Lewis, but you know, nobody cares anymore. It's naive of these corporations to think he'll be doing the big numbers those people probably think he should be doing. If a beer company wanted to sponsor our tour we'd do it—even non-alcoholic beer. But to some businessman who has no idea what's going on, they don't want to be associated with the name 'Mötley Crüe.' They don't fathom the people who see you or the money you'd bring in. To them you're just some scrungy band on MTV."

Mötley Crüe's strategies for eliciting financial support have at times been unconventional. For a "New Year's Evil" show back in 1981 at the Santa Monica Civic, they took out trade ads threatening to break up if they couldn't find proper management. "We never really planned to break up," Sixx notes. "But we knew what we needed." In the audience that night was Doug Thaler, a former rock guitarist and veteran agent who was subsequently hired to co-manage the band (with Doc McGhee) for seven years. With Rich Fisher and Julie Foley at Top Rock, Thaler remains the head of Crüe's management team.

In that time, Sixx, Neil, Mars and Lee have become the linchpins of a formidable business—logistics for 1990's *Dr. Feelgood* tour, for instance, included a 100-member band and support staff, four buses, 11 trucks and an airplane. But it took a few lessons before certain Crüe members began paying attention to the bottom line.

"During our first headline tour, *Theater of Pain*, we were trashing hotel and dressing rooms, wanting this and that," Neil says. "But that TV set you threw out the window you have to pay for. You think you're making all this money, and at the end you sit down with your accountant and discover you didn't make any. So, over the years you start wising up to the business."

While not directly involved in the recent negotiations with Elektra, bandmembers were regularly apprised of what was on the table.

"Our lawyer knew what we wanted and what we could give up," Neil explains. Wasn't there anything specifically demanded by the band? "Yeah," Neil laughs. "More."

Acknowledging past penchants for self-destructive revelry, however, Sixx notes that the new deal stipulates that their money be spread out over the course of several records.

"We played it safe. It will keep us honest. It can sit in the bank while we stay in a creative space. Money was not the issue for us—truckloads of that came in years ago. But money *is* the root of all evil, and it did fuck us up for a while. I've had a big problem with alcohol and drugs, and I don't want that anymore. If we fell back to what it was like in '87, I'd rather disband than see the band go down. I really want us to push ahead musically." —**Mark Rowland**

RAG TRADE

[*cont'd from page 42*] chandising companies for a royalty rate of as much as 25 percent of retail price. That's a far better deal than they'll likely get on their record deal. In return, T-shirt companies seek renewal options and other assurances to make it worth their while down the road.

"We try as best as we can to be A&R men as well," says Ross, who recalls Nice Man signing the Black Crowes to a merchandising deal after hearing the band's demo tape, well before the Crowes were packing theaters and opening arena shows.

But new ties between the merchandise firms and record companies have raised new concerns. Nice Man is now a joint venture with BMG. PolyGram has purchased Great Southern. Winterland, once owned by CBS, is now under the wing of MCA. Irving Azoff's Giant Records and Warner Bros. Records have formed Giant Merchandising. (Brockum is partnered with CPI, the Canadian concert-promotion powerhouse.) Will acts signed to a label be forced to cut a deal with that company's merchandising division?

Merchandise companies say no. They may request a right of first refusal to match the best deal an act finds elsewhere. But most also want the independence to pick their own potential winners.

Perhaps the most significant change in the concert merchandise business is that you don't even have to go to concerts to buy it anymore.

"I'm in the *rag trade* now!" remarked Keith Richards with amazement during the 1989 Steel Wheels tour, reacting to the line of Rolling Stones fashion wear sold through retail stores. "I get printouts from Macy's and J.C. Penney every week, like I used to get from record companies. So many T-shirts, so many leather jackets!"

The royalty rates for retail merchandise are much lower than for goods sold at concert arenas. But the potential for higher volume in products licensed to carry an act's name or logo is staggering, as the New Kids phenomenon proved. Compared with the $30 million in souvenirs the Kids sold on the road, according to the *Licensing Letter*, their retail sales in 1990 reached $770 million.

At that rate, who needs to sell records? —**Thom Duffy**

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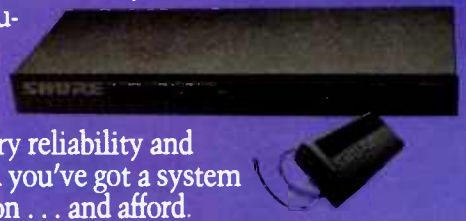

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L SERIES

THE NEW DEAL

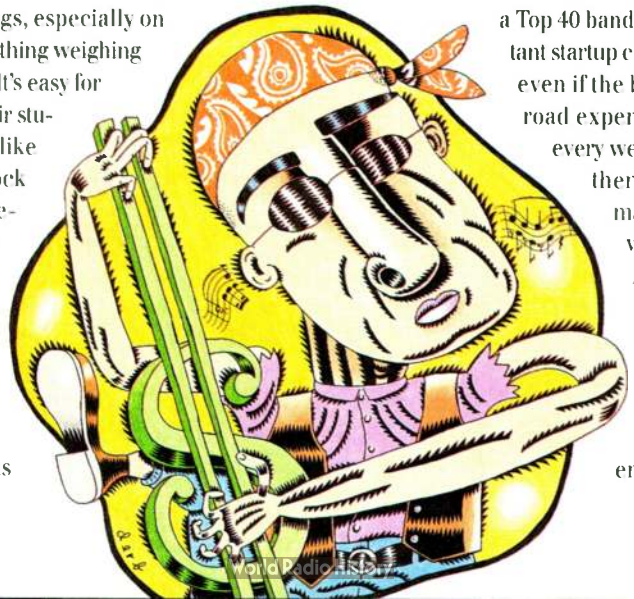
The Rules Young Bands Need to Know

BY MATT RESNICOFF

Alan and Dann just wanted to start a band, and for all the right reasons: After years spent in Los Angeles playing other people's music, they felt twinges of self-neglect. Studio time isn't cheap, but they had connections and they had songs. They started a group they called Giant and soon they had demos on every music executive's desk in the city.

Well, they hadn't been *just* playing around L.A. Until a little over a year ago, Alan Pasqua and Dann Huff were highly regarded session men with the reasonably secure, low-risk schedules most musicians only dream of—and with too much going for them musically to be content as studio hacks. But they were still a new band and needed a push like any other. A&M Records appeared to know a good thing.

The rest of Giant's tale sounds aphoristic: Money from the record company started pouring into everything necessary to promote the group's debut album *Last of the Runaways*. They toured with Heart, did MTV videos for three singles and got one into the Top 10, made a sound showing in album-oriented rock radio. Giant couldn't have asked for much more wind beneath their wings, especially on their virgin flight. There was only one thing weighing them down—they didn't sell records. It's easy for them to talk about it now, because their studio education is their saving grace (like mom always said, "Go join your rock band, just so long as you have something to fall back on"). Huff had actually moved from Nashville years ago, hoping to break into L.A.'s exclusive studio cadre, and he's since moved back; Alan now resides in quiet Santa Fe. Giant is currently seeking a new label association.



Giant was designed and delivered as a Top 40 band. A&M could afford the concomitant startup charges, equipment, videos, travel; even if the band took in a grand a night, its road expenses amounted to 10 times that every week. Without a major label behind them, Giant could not have even made a shot. As it worked out, Giant was never paid any money by A&M after the initial advance; the band ended up owing money to the record company for all A&M's efforts on their behalf.

What happens to a new band's money if they're fortunate enough to get a record contract?

Illustration: John Backderf

There are best-, worst- and mediocre-case scenarios. The fate of the Knack is a perfect example of the changing climate in a very imperfect industry: The band estimates its hit 1979 debut *Get The Knack* sold 3 million copies. The biggest difference between 1979 and now is video, one of the only recoupable *promotion* expenses. As Knack guitarist Berton Averre explains, "Videos represent part of what you owe the company—just like the album budget. When you see a band on MTV with three videos from their album, at, say, 75,000 bucks a pop, that's an extra $225,000 they have to make back before they're in the black. So when we made our album for $17,500 in 1979—and even in *those* times that was ridiculously small money—we were in the black that much quicker because there was just that much less to pay back. Young bands today should understand that every dime spent—the album budget, paying for the producer, paying for videos—isn't being given them. That is *their* money that's being spent, and until that money is paid back to the record company, they don't see dime one off of sales."

Though the Knack's members had individually earned several hundred thousand dollars by the end of 1980, Averre often tags statements about earnings with "as bandmembers," which points up an important distinction about where money from the music really comes from and how it's split up. If Ozzy Osbourne makes a record, he's the artist. Let's say Ozzy records the *Mac Davis Songbook*—Mac's the writer. Ozzy gets record royalties; Mac gets mechanical royalties, or publishing money. Here's what's important: *Mechanical* royalties are not against sales. You get mechanicals if you sell one record. There's a logic to it. It's not Mac Davis' problem whether Osbourne spent $10,000 or a million dollars to make that record; it's certainly not fair for Mac's money to be recoupable against Ozzy's budget. That's why mechanicals are paid to the author/publisher from the jump.

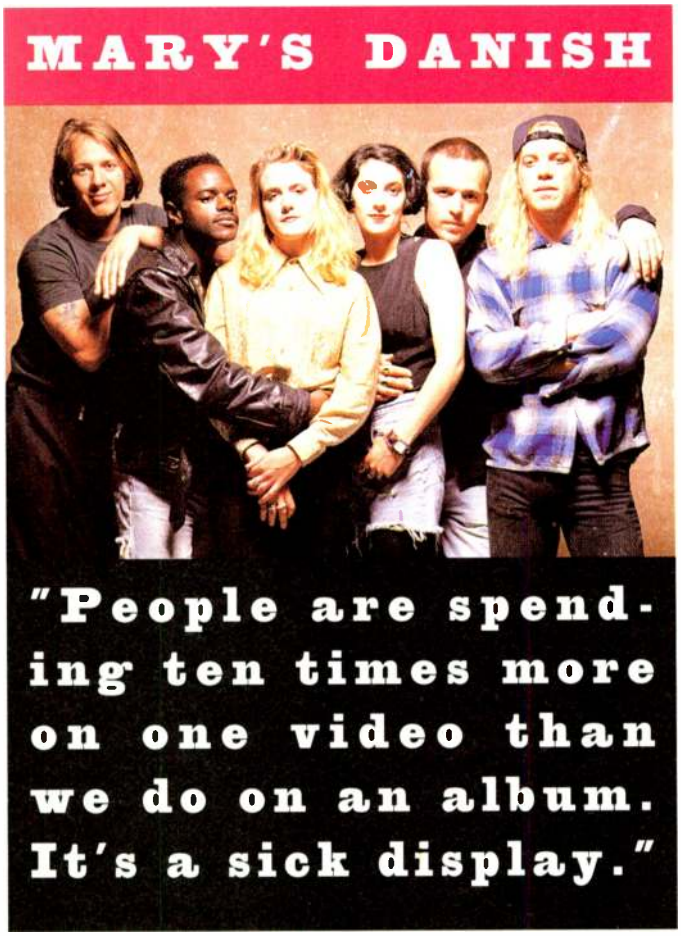
"Songwriters in bands usually make money long before the rest of the musicians," says Averre. "Let's say you spent $100,000 on your album and $100,000 on videos and other promotion. The band owes the company $200,000 out of their first profits; that comes out of record *sales*, not out of publishing royalties. Say there's two writers in a band of four: The bandmembers will be splitting record royalties equally, but the writers make the money off the publishing. So while the band—the four of them—are paying back throughout the first year their album is out, and haven't seen any profits because that money is all going back to pay off the $200,000—the writers are getting their royalty checks."

Jazz composer/keyboardist Wayne Horvitz, whose band the President sells fewer records than the Knack did, still gets mechanicals off 1989's *Bring Yr Camera*. Wayne laughs that he'll probably never see royalties off the disc because it won't sell enough copies to cover expenses incurred during production: a budget of $40,000, which included the musicians' and engineer's pay and Horvitz' personal advance. Those divisions were all determined in negotiations, so that if only half the budget went into the recording, Horvitz couldn't pocket the remaining $20,000. "The advance is very modest by pop standards," he notes. "It's also very good compared to what people I know get if they go to a small European label."

Horvitz, who records for Elektra's prestige division Nonesuch, is adamant that he really *likes* his deal. Though the label passed on his more improvisational projects, they did sign, had him produce and made an admirable effort to promote a pop-oriented record by his wife Robin Holcomb. He'll get a producer's fee as part of that budget, which is comparable to those for his own albums. Her artist advance comes in around the same place as his does for the President: a couple thousand bucks. If a record comprises all his tunes, he gets a couple of cents per sold record. Wayne makes most of his money producing and performing with other artists, plus commissions, an occasional solo show or duo with Bill Frisell in Europe—in other words, if his career centered on his identity as a major label recording artist, he'd still need a day job to pay his phone bill.

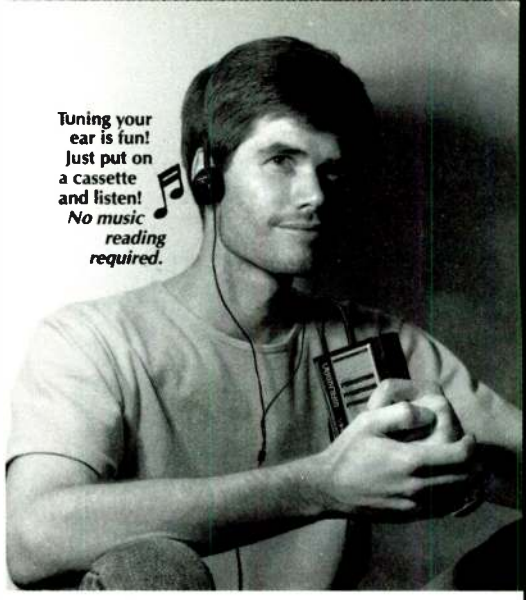
"Let's say *Bring Yr Camera* sold 8000. My royalties are 50 cents a record, against all my expenses. When 8000 records are sold, I start seeing royalties, because $40,000 has to be taken out first. But imagine how many records have to sell before *they* start making money: much less than 8000! They don't get 50 cents a record, they get six bucks, or whatever they sell it for wholesale. That's the whole scam of royalties. Long, long before you see any royalties, they start making back money. I'm not saying they get rich; they may in fact lose money. If they can sell 10,000 records and have pulled in $60 or $70,000, that doesn't mean they made money at that point, because they have other expenses that aren't recoupable, like manufacturing, their staff, phone bills. But my point is, they're not out there losing their shirt if I only sell 5000 copies. They're hardly *happy*, but they don't need to sell anywhere near the amount I do to start making my royalties."

Luckily, Wayne's songwriting royalties—his "mechanicals"—



Photograph: Chris Cuffaro/Visages

Does *your* ear need a tune-up?



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- ☐ I improvise poorly because I can't envision the tones I want to play.
- ☐ I try to steal "licks" from records, but the tones flash by too quickly.
- ☐ I can't figure out chord progressions without my instrument.
- ☐ I have all these incredible musical ideas "in my head," but I can't seem to play them without a lot of bad notes.
- ☐ It's embarrassing when I get "lost" and can't find my place.
- ☐ It takes me longer than I like to learn and memorize a new tune.
- ☐ I have difficulty singing harmony.
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come in twice a year from his sub-publisher in Europe, where jazz airplay is heavy and judiciously tallied by companies which take a cut for their trouble. Publishing deals bank on the short-term needs of poor young musicians. Say a new band's album is about to come out, and there's, as we say in the trade, a lot of "pump in the business." The band might be approached with a proposal: "Here's $200,000, and we end up with half of your publisher's share"—which is 25% of the whole pie, because a song is split between the writer's share and the publisher's share. "They're gambling," Averre says. "Their $200,000 advance is just like a record advance. That's not a bonus; the first $200,000 of publishing money you make pays that back. They're saying, 'Look, you haven't made a successful record before so you don't have money, and it's going to be nine to 16 months before you see any profits off this album. So here. Buy that sports car, pay off your credit cards, live like a rock star. What we're counting on is you're going to be a huge star and sell seven million albums and we're going to make a lot of money off that $200,000 investment.'"

The choice this poor young musician therefore has to make is between living comfortably now and accepting the possibility of trading away greater riches in the future. "There's two schools of thought," Averre says. "One is that if you believe you have a hit, you're giving up a lot of money for what seems like a good amount of money now. That does not happen to be my thinking. I feel if $200,000 given me today is a bargain compared to how much they're making two years from now.... If I sold myself cheap for giving them 25 percent of my whole publishing pie for $200,000, that means I'm making a *shitload* of money down the line! So if you're offered a comfortable, good advance, it seems worthwhile to take it."

Again, the Knack didn't have to wait for that because of their uncharacteristically rapid sales. "We lived on a modest salary until we knew the money was going to be rolling in, because we didn't have house payments or drug habits, so we waited and kept 100 percent of our publishing. Most people aren't going to be in that position, especially nowadays. Now you have records that literally stiffed, then a sin-

...A FEW THINGS TO WATCH FOR

CONTRACTS AND ADVANCES FOR NEW ARTISTS HAVE BEEN GETTING BETTER OVER THE YEARS. BUT LET'S FACE IT—THE MAJOR LABELS KNOW THE AVER-age young musician will slither across broken glass for a recording deal, so they negotiate hard. That said, you don't have to agree to everything a label wants. Here are a few things to think—and argue—about.

Publishing Most record companies will want to be your music publisher as well. You don't have to let them. Right now first-time artists are getting richer publishing deals than ever before, and those advances are very important if you're just getting started. If you do sign with your label's publishing arm, make sure the deal is competitive and that the advance cannot be cross-collateralized against your record royalties (otherwise you don't get any record royalties until your publishing advance is repaid. Not good).

Merchandising You're thinking, "Hey—I wanna make a record. Who cares about T-shirts?" That's just what they want you thinking. But chew on this: Two years ago, the biggest money-maker for MCA Records was New Kids on the Block, who are signed to Sony's Columbia. The reason? MCA owns Winterland, the merchandising company that licensed and sold New Kids paraphernalia. The labels will try and tell you that they should have a piece of this since they're going to help break you, develop your image and design the logos and artwork that will be sold on your merchandise. Tell them you'll think about it after they show you what a great job they can do with your record. (You can tell them anything you want once you have a platinum record.)

Attorneys Hmmm...how to put this? There are many good entertainment lawyers. And many of the best contract attorneys tend to do a lot of work for the record companies as well as artists. This has sometimes raised the charge that entertainment attorneys don't negotiate hard enough when they are representing an artist—especially an unproven one—in contract talks with labels (L.A. attorney Don Engel has been a particularly vocal critic of lax standards within his profession). The lawyer who just got the biggest deal for a supergroup may not be the one you should hire. Be careful.

Think Global The U.S. share of the world record market is shrinking and other countries besides the U.K. are becoming more important. Typically, new artists are expected to take a half-royalty outside the U.S. (i.e., if you're getting a 12 percent royalty, you'll get six percent for all records sold outside this country). Labels are willing to give established artists a bigger chunk of foreign sales, so at least try for it.

Production Deals You should be leery of production deals—that is, arrangements where you are signed to a producer, manager or attorney's production company and it is the production company that has the deal with the record company. It is an unfortunate fact of life that it's almost impossible to get anyone to listen to you at a record company without an introduction and that the price of making those connections is sometimes one of these deals. They will sometimes cause you a lot of grief and always cost you a chunk of your income. Obviously if a top producer or manager wants to sign you to a production deal, you'll have to consider it. But you might also try telling anyone and everyone that you've been offered a deal: The herd mentality rules in this business and hearing that someone else wants you could get you a less encumbered arrangement. Generally they stink.

And Finally Don't forget that everything is negotiable. If a record company wants you bad enough, they will consider all kinds of proposals. If you have good management and legal representation, they should help you examine and question all aspects of your contract. As the saying goes: If you don't ask, you don't get.

—Fred Goodman

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PHOTOGRAPH MIKE RYAN

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gle comes off a movie and makes it a hit and before you know it the album's top ten. So record companies don't give up on albums that quickly anymore. The notable popular successes now are those who've slugged it out. Guns N' Roses—that album was out for a year-and-a-half and all of a sudden their ship came in. When that happens the other companies go, 'Oh, I guess we shouldn't have given up on so-and-so after three months!' Hanging tough and getting by is the rule."

Like young pro baseball players on a roll, new bands tasting success will only grit their teeth for so long as the muckity-mucks call the shots. If a debut pushes the company toward the black side of the ledger, the bargaining power shifts during renegotiations. "When the Knack were signed," Averre recalls, "several companies wanted us and we were able to make a very good first-band contract, like $125,000 for the first album and $200,000 for the second. See, these things are contingent. Nowadays, a modest contract is about $200,000 with 50,000 for the producer and another 25 for the engineer—studio costs have gone way up. They will tie it to success. They will say in the contract, 'You're guaranteed $200,000 for the first album budget and $225,000 for the second; if the first goes gold, that 225 becomes 250.' But it's *always* budget. There are people in such a position of advantage that they're given multimillion-dollar contracts, and I have to assume that's bonuses; in most cases there are no signing bonuses. I mean, the last album we made, this year, there was a very modest bonus for the band: living expenses. There's two possibilities: a fund and a budget. A budget is, they keep the money in *their* bank, you send in your studio bills and they pay them as they come in out of their $200,000. The desirable one is the fund, where they go, 'Here's $200,000. Put it in *your* bank, and if you're lucky enough to make the album for $150,000, the band gets to split the last 50.'" This time, he laughs, the Knack got a budget.

Okay, okay, here's the obligatory music-biz horror story, what Mary's Danish singer Julie Ritter classifies as "a textbook case of what should never happen." As she tells it, she's getting ready to leave for a tour. She's got no phone, no house, and she's rubbing her neck because she's been sleeping on her sister's floor. The Danish recorded for the Chameleon label before being picked up by the burgeoning new record division of Morgan Creek Pictures. "We liked their philosophy," she says. "They're very artist-oriented—every label will tell you that, but you can tell who's sincere. They were fed up with big labels, and they were smaller and released one record a month, and they got behind it in the hardest time, during that first month."

Mary's Danish had signed with Chameleon for a one-off; they released *There Goes the Wondertruck* and were then free to look elsewhere. Then the lead singer who sang their one hit threatened to quit. Then the band received erroneous figures from Chameleon that they were moving 100,000 pieces a week and used the information to embarrass themselves during negotiations with new labels. Chameleon offered to re-sign the band with or without their lead singer—good will to reverse bad figures. But because of Chameleon's size, Mary's Danish found themselves playing in clubs adjacent to record shops that didn't carry their album. On a time-limit basis, they opted to wait for the company to hook up an associate-major-label deal that could provide the necessary boost in distribution, and in the meantime began preproduction for their next record. While waiting, they

released a live album on Chameleon, who filtered dribs and drabs of cash into the band's pockets for living and recording expenses. They waited some more. Then everyone at Chameleon was fired and the label made plans to regroup in New York. Nobody in Mary's Danish paid rent for six months; litigation started, and Morgan Creek bought the record for $200,000. Not one member of the band saw dime one of that heap. These guys are what the industry refers to as a successful alternative group.

"From the top down," says Ritter, "you don't make money on sales unless you sell a *lot*. People are spending ten times more on one video than we do on an album; it's a sick display. A friend of mine got a large budget for their band, so they went to England to record, put strings on the album—and they're a college band. So college radio didn't want them because they were too AOR, and AOR rejected them because they still had their alternative sound underneath. Now they're in debt."

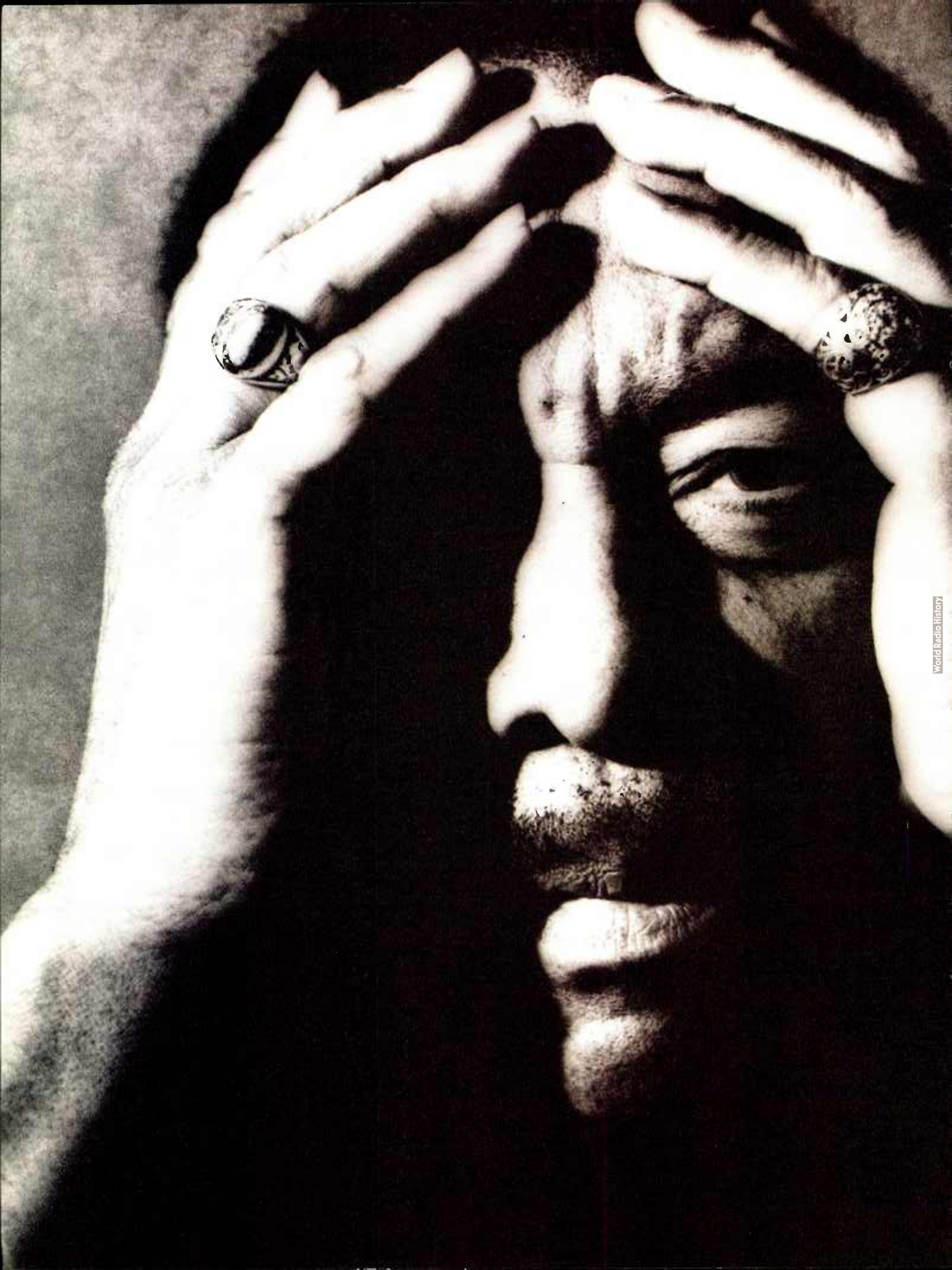
When it comes to money, Horvitz observes, "People are weird. They say, 'You sold this, why doesn't the record company give you twice as much money?' Well, I don't enjoy waste; if it's necessary, I'm happy to spend the money, but if it means that people are going to lay around more and eat up studio time, I'd rather be at home. People get into, 'Great, we'll take a month.' Like I was saying to Peter Holsapple, who worked on Robin's record: Records take either five days or two months, and not much in between. For example, if you give it two-and-a-half weeks, you start *trying* to do the things you could do if you had two months, and the clock runs out. You're better off not getting obsessed about the time feel being back for one bar and just letting the music breathe! Otherwise, you eat up so much time and the record ends up sterilized.

"$40,000 is a very nice budget for this music," Horvitz continues. "I've made quite a few records for $800. One of the only ways you're going to make royalties is by getting the best product for the lowest budget. But I don't make any money off the President. Even with my advances, they're so few and far between that they can't count as a significant part of my income. Hell, I've had two advances in three years and they're only a few thousand dollars." Like friend, labelmate and downtown jazz star Bill Frisell, Horvitz moved from New York to Seattle, where living is cheaper and more emotionally stable. "I can get by," Wayne says.

The Danish isn't that sweet. "I've never made any money doing this," says Julie Ritter. "The big alternative station out here in Los Angeles, kROQ, was playing our song, and we'd be at clubs where kids would come up and say, 'You guys must have big houses.' We were all living in a little apartment on Riverside Drive. We do own our own merchandising. The Red Hot Chili Peppers made money for a million years that way before their gold record and MTV."

Until that happens for alternative-rock sensation Mary's Danish, all proceeds from the road will go into plane fares, hotel bills and reimbursing Julie Ritter's parents for wear-and-tear on the ice-box door. "I don't feel we're suffering, though," she says. "It's an investment. You pay dues. In the first years we paid them in clubs, and now we pay them by putting all our money into hotel rooms. We're building up capital for our overhead.

"It's very difficult to live this way, but it's what I really want to do. Not to play martyr, but the perils are worth it, compared to getting a job in a bank." Nice alternative. "Especially alternative music—we're not thinking of buying houses. We just want to get a gig."



Earl Palmer the Rhythm Bomber, the Funk Machine from New Orleans

From Bessie Smith to Elvis Costello, the Amazing Life and Perfect Time of a Great Rock 'n' Roll Pioneer

Right over there my mother had her dancing group, the Rinky Dinks Revue. Over here was a sandwich place called Joe Sheep's, they had the best hot sausage sandwiches in town for a dime. Joe Sheep was an old guy, light-complected guy, and he was the meanest old so-and-so you ever met. You'd come up there to get a sandwich: 'Whatcha want, li'l nigger?' 'I wanna hot sausage sandwich.' You goin' through your pockets, pullin' pennies out: 'Hurry up, you little motherfucker!' Oh, he was a terrible old man, but those sandwiches was delicious!"

The rental car came up St. Philip Street, past a group of poker-faced stoopsitters. Interrupting his travelogue, the driver, a handsome gravelly-voiced man in a tan summer suit, rolled down his window.

"Hey! Any y'all seen Bo' Weevil?"

"Naw man."

"Well, tell him his cousin Earl said hello."

By Tony Scherman *Photograph by Deborah Samuel*

People called it rhythm and blues; I

"Yeah man, how y'all doin'?" The driver confided to his carmate: "Bo' Weevil—that's my cousin Arthur Landry." The father of rock 'n' roll drumming was taking a sentimental drive, with many stops, through the neighborhood where he'd spent his first 30 years, the Treme [pronounced Tre-*may*] section of New Orleans. He pulled up across from a tumbledown wooden building with a mansard roof and lettering right across its faded-green slats: "Caldonia Bar." "This is the *new* Caldonia," said Earl, climbing out with a groan. "Ol' Caldonia was back where Armstrong Park is now; Professor Longhair used to play there for wine, for nothin'." From the honky-tonk came raucous cries and jukebox noise: the ReBirth Brass Band's "Do Whatcha Wanna," B.B. King. Earl paused to admire a sturdy local, about 18 months old. "How ya doin' little man, little man; want some candy, man?" A nice little compact rolled up, a friendly-faced kid at the wheel. "Hey!" someone said. "That's Kermit from the ReBirth Brass Band!" An old man pointed at Earl. "Hey! This is Earl Palmer!" The kid's face lit up and he stopped. A little awkwardly, Earl sauntered up to the car, spat over his shoulder. They hadn't much to say, it was just the mutual attraction of the famous: an authentic local hero, 67 years old, and a youngblood on his first nice car. "We playin' at Armstrong Park, 5:30 tonight," said Kermit, "c'mon if you like." "Okay bruh," said Earl, "y'all have a nice time."

A quick beer and Earl was ready to roll. "Over there," he said, "is Craig Elementary. The [Count Basie] trombonist Bennie Powell grew up across the street"—the second floor of a rundown building facing the brick school—"and he would play hooky, hang out that window right there makin' faces at us in the geography room. We're goin' 'Miz Gair, Miz Gair! Bennie's not sick, lookit him!' and he'd duck; soon as she turned around he'd pop up, stick his tongue out."

EARL PALMER HAS HIS OWN WAY OF DRIVING, IN WHICH SIGNALS do not figure prominently. He sped through the French Quarter, turned right onto Canal and screeched to a stop. "Aw Jesus god*damn*, I shoulda went toward the river." He was in town for the annual Jazz & Heritage Festival (and to buy the hot sausage he freezes and brings back home to L.A.). After 35 years in California, his voice still has a slight Creole lilt; "tomtom" is almost "tumtum." "Last night," he said, "I went to hear Nicholas Payton. *Awesome* 17-year-old trumpeter. Seventeen—I got drawers that old! I think I'm wearing a pair today! A friend of mine heard Payton; she was furious 'cause Art Blakey drowned him out. She said, 'Jesus Christ the man oughta know how to play drums by now.' I said, 'Give him a break, he's 75 and deaf.' You have to understand one thing, you're dealing with a bunch of guys who dissipated for 70 years. Very big dissipators. Particularly Blakey.

"Anyway, who cares if a drummer is loud? I *love* Tony Williams, man. Once you understand he's loud you listen to what he's playin', not how loud; you evaluate the performance, not the volume. Tony is a fantastic drummer. There's a younger guy that's pretty awesome, not as a jazz player but overall, and that's Dave Weckl. The other guy is Smitty Smith. Smitty—oh, brother! Ohhh! *Oy vey*!"

"What kind of player do you think you'd have become if you hadn't gotten so involved in the studio?"

"A good player, but just another good player. Gettin' involved in the studio in that exacting way, that's what made me a really confident player. When you walk away from a difficult session, or a film, some bastard of a part, knowing the music was hard and you played it perfectly and the 35th take sounded like you *loved* it, that's when you know, 'I've arrived, I'm a *musician*.' Not a soloist—you wanna be a soloist, get your own band.

"'Cause the drums are not a lead instrument." He suddenly burst out laughing. "Except this one time, way up in the mountains outside L.A., this party where none of the guys could play. The leader kept saying, 'If you don't know the song, lay out!' I ended up playing by myself! Don't ever let anyone tell you the drums can't play the melody!" Earl was almost weeping with laughter. "'Lay out! Lay out!' I was playin' alone!!"

"So Earl, who's your favorite drummer?"

"All-time? Buddy Rich. Buddy Rich is a freak, man, he was born a fuckin' drum. But he'd try to goad people into fightin' him, which nobody would because he was a great fighter. Small but tenacious, man. Mean. Could fight.

"I also idolized Shelly Manne. I first met him right here in 1951. I waited for him after a concert. The cop kept saying, 'Get back, boy.' Shelly came out and turned to go the other way, so I started after him, saying 'Hey Shelly!' The cop grabbed me and said, 'Nigger, didn't I tell you to get back?' Shelly heard that, turned around and said, 'Oh, there you are! I was waiting for you!' He had never seen me in his life. Later he stuck his neck out to get me gigs. I ended up naming my daughter after him."

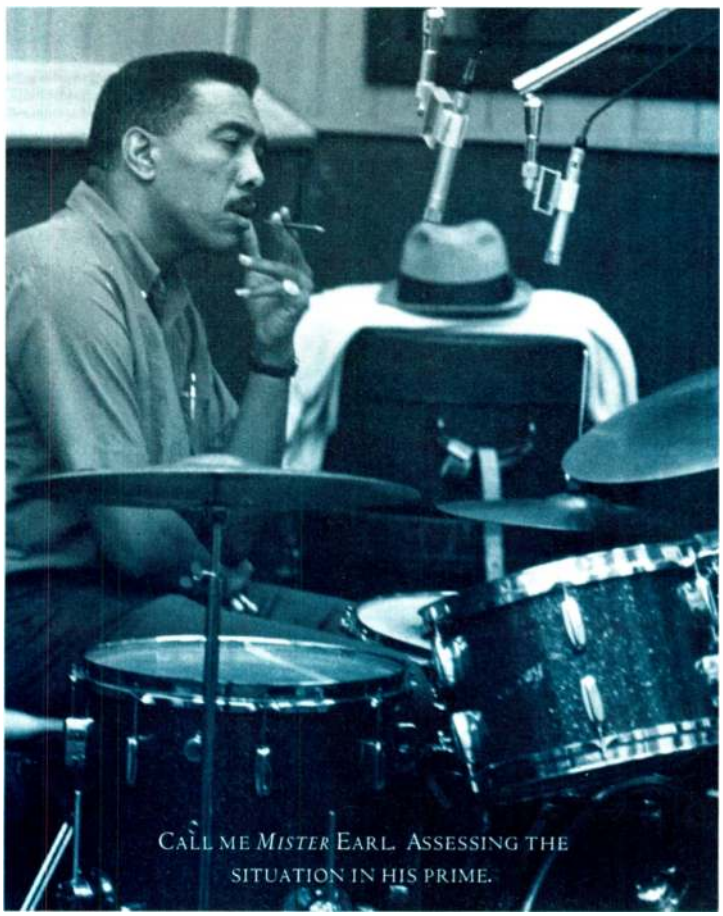
In a sandwich shop in Metairie, Earl sat down to a big oyster po' boy. Watching Earl Palmer leaf through *Musician* is unsettling: Page after page holds nothing but artists he's worked with. Elvis Costello on *King of America* ("Ray Brown and I thought he was kinda uppity until T-Bone Burnett said, 'No, man, he's in awe.' 'Awe?! He's a millionaire and we ain't got a fuckin' quarter!'"). Bonnie Raitt ("I knew her father too; we used to have a few drinks at Donte's"). Neil Young's classic first album. Tina Turner, Frank Sinatra, Sarah Vaughan (*The Explosive Side of Sarah Vaughan* has some of Earl's finest big-band/jazz work), John Lee Hooker. Not to mention hundreds of others: Ritchie Valens ("La Bamba" and "Donna"), Ricky Nelson, Sam Cooke ("Shake," "You Send Me," "Having a Party," "Twistin' The Night Away," "Wonderful World"), Eddie Cochran, Gene McDaniels ("100 Pounds of Clay"), the Righteous Brothers ("You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'"), Lightnin' Hopkins and Count Basie (on *Manufacturers of Soul*, a 1968 Basie collaboration with, amazingly, Jackie Wilson). Quincy Jones' music to *The Pawnbroker*, *In Cold Blood* and *Rosemary's Baby* and hundreds of other movie scores—*Valley of the Dolls*, *Lady Sings the Blues*, *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, *The Hot Spot* (Earl's only Grammy nomination). Lalo Schifrin's cool "Mission Impossible" theme and Hale Curtin's bumptious "Meet The Flintstones"; the theme songs and incidental music to "77 Sunset Strip," "The Odd Couple," "Ironside." Brenda Holloway (the original "You've Made Me So Very Happy"), Dobie Gray's "The In Crowd," the drum-thunder behind Ray Charles on "I Don't Need No Doctor," *Diana Ross and the Supremes Join the Temptations*, Maria Muldaur's *Waitress in a Donut Shop*, Lou Rawls' "Dead End Street," Henry Mancini. Earl even played country—Buck Owens, Speedy West, Roy Clark's first demo. And all this came *after* the seven hectic years in New Orleans when Earl stitched the fibers

st called it doing the job." —Earl Palmer

of rock drumming.

With his angular cheekbones and wolfish gray-brown eyes, Earl is the product of a typically complicated black New Orleans lineage: French/Greek on his mother's side, Choctaw on his father's. Thelma Theophile was a 19-year-old tap dancer when she married Edward Palmer, a ship's cook from White Plains, New York. She was seven months pregnant when Edward Palmer was killed in a storm off Newfoundland. Thelma went home, and her only baby was born in 1924 in his grandma's house on Bienville Street.

By the age of five Earl was a professional dancer, working Bourbon Street sidewalks, speakeasies and whorehouses in a white tux his mother had sewn. "We had a four-man troupe called Hats, Coats, Pants and Buttons. These two guys named McElroy and Green, they were great dancers but they were junkies, they saw me and figured, 'Great! He'll get plenty of tips we can steal.' But Pleasant Joseph joined us on ukelele and he'd keep them other guys from stealin' my money. Carried me home at four in the morning, asleep." Pleasant Joseph became the blues singer Cousin Joe, and as an old man told an interviewer, "Earl Palmer was about nine or 10 years old, but he was one of the greatest tap dancers in the city. He could outdance us all."



CALL ME *MISTER* EARL. ASSESSING THE SITUATION IN HIS PRIME.

Eight or so months a year, Earl joined his mother on the TOBA black vaudeville circuit (the Theatre Owners Booking Agency, called by its artists "Tough on Black Asses"), playing segregated theaters with blues singer Ida Cox's Darktown Scandals. "It was the most marvelous life a kid could ask for": sharing the road with characters like Jazzlips Richardson, a minstrel-show dancer who flickered briefly on Broadway, or blues pianist Jesse Crump from Paris, Texas, who married Cox. Earl met Satchel Paige, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith; "I remember Miss Bessie bein' juiced, but everyone was juiced 'round then. We traveled by bus and I slept in the luggage rack. We'd get into town at daybreak and to keep from renting a room everybody slept on the big thick carpets in the theater lobby. But I'd go watch the matinee movie or go out on the town lookin' to meet the kids, foragin' around, playin', havin' a great time. I got asked to audition for Farina in the touring show of *Little Rascals*. My grandmother took me down and they said, 'The kid is fantastic but we can't use him.' 'Why not?' 'He's too light.' They thought about blackening my face, but my grandma said, 'They ain't puttin' no burnt cork on your face, you black enough. Too black as it is.'

"Music didn't mean that much to me; it was mostly something useful to dance to. But when I started playing, I found I'd already gotten a whole musical education. As a tap-dancer I already knew how to support a lyric. I'd learned the 32-bar song form: where the bridge is, when to change colors." Not only did he know song structure; he came to drumming with a mental encyclopedia of rhythms and beats: "Tap dancing, after all, is only playing drums with your feet.

"So I'd started in on drums just after '45, when I came out of the service, and got kinda well known in town though I didn't read or anything, didn't really know what I was doing." His buddy Red Tyler talked him into going to the Grunewald School of Music, a sort of vocational school that became a postwar haven for young jazzmen; Earl majored in piano, minored in percussion. The best bandleader in New Orleans was a hardnosed trumpet player named Dave Bartholomew, who hired Earl in 1947.

By 1949 Earl had played on his first hit, Bartholomew's proto-R&B "Country Boy," and almost from then on Earl Palmer's life split in two. If he became a legend as rock's first great drummer, he always considered himself something else. "I'm a jazz drummer, man. People forget—us guys on those Little Richard records were playing *jazz* before we played rhythm and blues. There wasn't any rhythm and blues! We were just able to adapt, make things a little funky, play a shuffle instead of a jazz feel—which is how rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll, whatever you call it, came about. People *called* it rhythm and blues. I just called it doing the job.

"But my happiest times were playing jazz, trying out them Bird arrangements down at the Dew Drop." Hub of New Orleans' vibrant early-'50s jazz scene, the Dew Drop Inn was an amazing club/flophouse/de facto hiring hall, open 24 hours a day. R&B stars like Charles Brown would headline, and then everybody jammed until daybreak. "Cleanhead Vinson, Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt. Bird himself, man. Charlie Parker was always losing rental cars, he would forget where he parked 'em, leave 'em all over town. I jammed with

Photograph: Michael Ochs Archive

Bird with Jack Lamont, li'l alto player we had got killed by a bus." There was at least one job with Papa Celestin's old-time jazzers "in Baton Rouge, no, I think it was Biloxi. I tried to drink like them old guys and fell right off the bandstand." He even played with Armstrong, when Pops came home for 1949's Mardi Gras. "Dave Bartholomew's band played the New Orleans Coliseum and Pops was there. Earl Hines too. Hines was an asshole, he said to Pops, 'You shouldn't be playing with those guys.' Pops said, 'Fuck ya, I'm home.'"

Rock 'n' roll, meanwhile, paid Earl's way: $41.25 for three hours or four songs, whichever came first, no overtime. As big-city record men moved in on New Orleans, what had started as a mere '40s continuation of the race-music recording trips of the '20s and '30s became rock's first great session scene, built around the "Studio Band" at tiny J&M Studios: Lee Allen and Red Tyler on saxophones, four or five key guitarists and pianists, Frank Fields on bass and Earl Palmer, drums. From 1949 to 1957, Earl powered Fats Domino hits from "The Fat Man" to "I'm Walkin'" (Earl's favorite drum part from his New Orleans period, with its joyful snare/bass-drum parade beat). Three years after Earl put a stately, basically pre-rock shuffle on Lloyd Price's 1952 "Lawdy Miss Clawdy," an androgynous young screamer was brought to J&M —and Earl played on every big hit Little Richard ever had (except "Keep A Knockin'" and "Ooh My Soul"): "Tutti Frutti," "Long Tall Sally," "Slippin' and Slidin'," "Rip It Up," "Lucille," "Jenny, Jenny," "Good Golly, Miss Molly." It may be Earl's greatest recorded legacy.

Married since 1947, Earl fell in love with Susan Weidenpesch, a white New Yorker, in 1956. Interracial marriage was illegal in Louisiana until the early '60s (so was interracial music-making; Earl was busted for playing with whites in 1955). So in February 1957 Earl took a job as an A&R man with Aladdin Records and left for Los Angeles. He and Susan married in 1964; Susan died of cancer seven years later.

Had he never played a lick in California, Earl's place in pop-music history would be safe. But he plunged into a huge body of work: by rough estimate, more than 11,000 sessions by the early '80s, upwards of 25,000 pieces of music. Union scale was $60 a session; by the early '60s he was getting double scale. His peak years were the late '60s, when he cleared $180,000 a year, sometimes staying in the studio from nine a.m. until 11 p.m.: three three-hour sessions "and maybe I'd do a jingle in between. There were times we'd cut an album a day: six songs in the morning, six after lunch. We'd do an album with Gene McDaniels, next day one with Vicki Carr, next day the Crickets." Years of rimshots gave Earl a carpenter's injury: a bad blood clot at the base of his left thumb.

"The first time I heard Earl," says drummer Jim Keltner, a member of the L.A. studio generation after Earl, "was a Little Richard session at MGM. The power, groove and taste—God, I thought, that feels so good! He had a mysterious sophistication so different from the rock drumming I knew at the time, the Sandy Nelson or Frankie Avalon records I'd heard. It was the way he could bring the sound out of the drums. Earl came up in an era when there were no drum mikes for live playing, or maybe just one, so he learned how to play loud, soft and in-between. It's almost a lost art in today's rock 'n' roll."

The studios of L.A.—Gold Star, Sunset Sound, Radio Recorders, Western—were the main lab for the most profitable experiment ever in pop music: the bleaching of R&B into rock 'n' roll, turning the salacious winks and nods of ghetto life into teen dreams, desexualizing "Roll with Me Henry" into "Dance with Me Henry," "Sweet Little Sixteen" into "Surfin' USA." Earl was right there in the crucible. "If any single musician," wrote critic Robert Palmer recently, "can be credited with defining rock & roll as a rhythmic idiom distinct from the jump, R&B and all else that preceded it, that musician is surely Earl Palmer." By the time Earl left New Orleans he'd already forged the new style, ironing the blues shuffle into a straight 4/4 with a heavy backbeat and a peppery, syncopated bass drum straight from New Orleans parade bands. Earl was better than first-rate: He was a creator.

In the Great Experiment, the nuttiest professor of all was Phil Spector, who made a point of calling rock 'n' roll "pop blues" and used a bedrock of R&B (and mostly black artists) to build huge, neo-Romantic cathedrals of sound for America's teenagers: "little symphonies for the kids," as he put it. Spector's first-call drummer was Hal Blaine, but he often used Earl. "Spector, you could always get along with him, if you didn't need him. If you needed him he was horrible. He wanted complete control. 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" took maybe three days to get

right: a lot of double-scale money for me. Maybe on [Ike and Tina Turner's] 'River Deep Mountain High' I had a bit more freedom. That was a hell of a session too—Phil threw Ike Turner out. Both of 'em had guns; I was thinking, 'Aw, why don't they shoot each other, they so bad?'"

The only early-'60s alchemist more single-minded than Spector in turning R&B into pop was Motown Records. The company's artists were black, but its clever slogan was "The Sound of Young America": It was for everyone. Earl played on almost a decade's worth of Motown songs; earlier than people realize, Motown was using L.A. musicians. The players themselves were hardly aware of it: "There was a union rule in those days that the artist had to be in the studio. So we found ourselves playing behind these two girls, the Lewis Sisters, and they never had a release in their life! I'd hear a Temptations song on the radio and think, 'Damn, I never played with the Tempts, but that's me!' It turned out Motown was shipping our tracks back to Detroit and recutting the vocals. When the union found out, Motown had to pay us

Tumtums & Crescent City Orbs

BIRKS [DIZZY GILLESPIE] is somethin'. I did a Monterey Jazz All-Stars thing with him and Gil Fuller's big band. He said, 'You unique.'

"I said, 'Thank you, Birks!'

"He said, 'Ain't talkin' 'bout your fuckin' playing—'

"'Well *fuck* you, then!'

"'—I'm talkin' 'bout that cymbal. I like that one. You wanna give it to me?' Birks, he would carry a cymbal around and give it to drummers: 'Here, use this.'"

The cymbal Dizzy admired was an old Zildjian "that sounded like shit until I put rivets in it, then it was the best rivet cymbal I ever heard." In his New Orleans years Earl played a Gretsch kit: two mounted toms, one floor tom, snare, bass and 14" hi-hat. Later he added Ludwig, Rogers, Camco and Yamaha kits; the Rogers set had two mounted toms, 13" and 14". Except for one Paiste ride, his cymbals have always been Zildjians. His current drums are "a little Ludwig kit": snare, 20" bass, 13" and 14" mounted toms, 16" floor tom, 20" Zildjian ride, 17" Paiste ride, 18" Zildjian sizzle and 14" hi-hat.

retroactive money.

"I broke with Motown in the early '70s. They claimed to be 'the soul company' and it irked me that the highest-paid people in that company were not blacks. They'd heard me talkin' and had already backed off on calling me. I didn't care. Don't claim to be almighty black if you can't find no black people to do your business and excuse me, but fuck y'all, don't call me no more. They're such hypocrites, Motown.

"In the original Motown sound, they didn't use any cymbals. The first few times I worked with them, I'd go to the cymbals and they'd say, 'No no!' and I'd say, 'Oh, right, y'all don't like cymbals.' So I'd concentrate on the snare, and that related right back to New Orleans. Don't mistunderstand me: It was [Motown drummer] Benny Benjamin who created that no-cymbal sound. Him and the bass player [James Jamerson] made the Motown Sound, them two guys and Wah-Wah Watson the guitar player. I knew Jamerson, we toured with Maria Muldaur, and I do believe he died of a broken heart from that first big TV special [NBC's "Motown 25," in 1983]. They mentioned every goddamn body connected with Motown but those two guys. Jamerson had stopped drinking, and he started again.

"But that's what tees me off about the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. How many instrumentalists do you see in that? They couldn't ignore Dave Bartholomew, but who else is there? Not myself, not Benny Benjamin, not Jamerson. These guys started *sounds*, man; these guys locked singers in, singers that had some little song, sumbitches couldn't keep time in a basket.

"But when you talk about rock 'n' roll, you talkin' 'bout only one kind of music. In the '60s I started turning down dates to prove a point, that I hadn't studied music for four years to play rock 'n' roll." The records Earl's proudest of aren't with rockers, but with Sarah Vaughan—"the greatest female vocalist of all time, outside opera." His small-band jazz albums, while not easy to find, are first-rate: a handful each with flutist Buddy Collette and guitarist Howard Roberts; 1958's wonderfully titled *Swingin' Flute in Hi-Fi* by the Strollers (Earl, Plas Johnson and others) and Lalo Schifrin's 1982 *Ins and Outs*, on which Earl is especially good: muscular, smooth and fast. Earl has toured with Schifrin, Peggy Lee and Benny Carter, who once congratulated him on the best display of sight-reading Carter had ever heard from a drummer.

The West Coast's studios were clogged with brilliant musicians grinding away in obscurity. For Earl, "the most unsung of them all is [arranger] Ernie Freeman. A genius. He'd be drunk a whole week, write three, four albums and know every damn note he wrote. I'd see him arrange for a 30-piece orchestra, never sit down at the piano. Write a score like he was writin' a letter. When he died it was four, five days before anyone found him. The biggest hit Sinatra ever had, what was that? 'Strangers in the Night.' That's a pretty good example of Ernie's talent. And they never signed him up for any film work because he was black."

Nor has Earl ever been asked to produce an album, "even though I *came* here as an A&R man, which is what? A producer. Besides, who the fuck they think is running most of the fuckin' dates, excuse my language, while some little jackass producer don't know his ass from a hole in the ground is in the booth? The instrumentalists, that's who. Twenty years ago, [singer/keyboardist] Ronnie Barron told a Warners executive,

I won't call his name, that he wanted me to produce his album. The guy said, 'Oh, Earl's a good drummer but he can't produce.' He didn't even investigate to find out if I could. If I were white it would've been 'Okay, let's give him a try.' I've been asked if people could borrow my drums because they like their sound. What the hell, they think the drums play themselves? I said, 'You really want 'em? Really? Okay. Cost you triple scale and cartage.'"

Lots of Earl's frustration is funneled into his new job. In the early '80s, his calls finally began to taper off ("Electronics is what fucked me up; if you're a drummer you play what they consider drums and right now that's electronic drums"). So in 1982 he ran for, and won, the job of treasurer of the 10,000-member Local 47 of the American Federation of Musicians. Beaten in '84, he was re-elected in 1990. He oversees what he refers to as "the company"'s finances: membership, bookkeeping, computers. "It's a matter of doing something constructive based on the only life I know. If I can help a musician with his dues structure, that's great. I know how difficult it is out there. Anybody can come in and talk, if I'm not tied up. People come in and ask about drumming all the time, which is okay, that's helping 'em too—*if* I'm not doin' anything. If I'm busy I'm not there to give a drum lesson.

"I'll stay at the union the rest of my life, if I keep winning. If I don't, I'm retired. I don't think I'll ever go back to work as a drummer" (though he sits in almost nightly with jazz groups). "There's still a lot of places I'd like to go. But some of those, the reasons I once wanted to go aren't there anymore. I'd love to go to Tahiti and find me a little hut on the other side of the beach with a whole lot of beautiful young Tahitian girls, but what the hell am I going to do with them at 67?"

"What are you proudest of?"

"My kids."

"What music?"

"Hell, all of it. I've played good rock, good jazz, I've even played good polka and I'm proud of it all. I'm proud of the respect I've achieved, whether I've got any *money* to show for it or not. I didn't expect to have any money. I was born poor. I'm glad I have the understanding to know why I'm not rich. I'm glad I'm not bitter about having experienced so many things that's been disadvantageous to me; that I'm not so bitter I couldn't teach my children that you deal with people on a one-on-one basis, you

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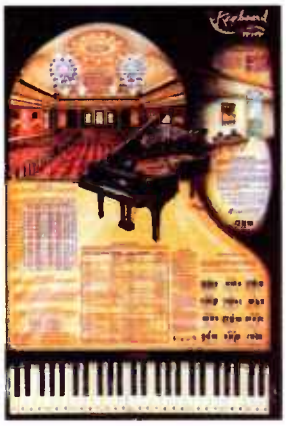

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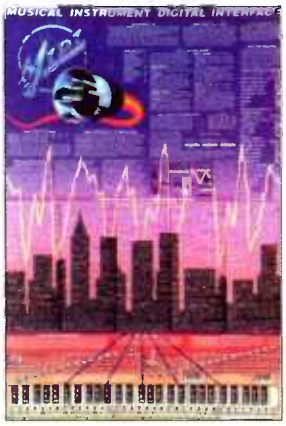

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don't condemn any people as a whole. I'm proud I got that over to my children and that they're getting it over to their children. Because things *will* get better, I've seen them get better."

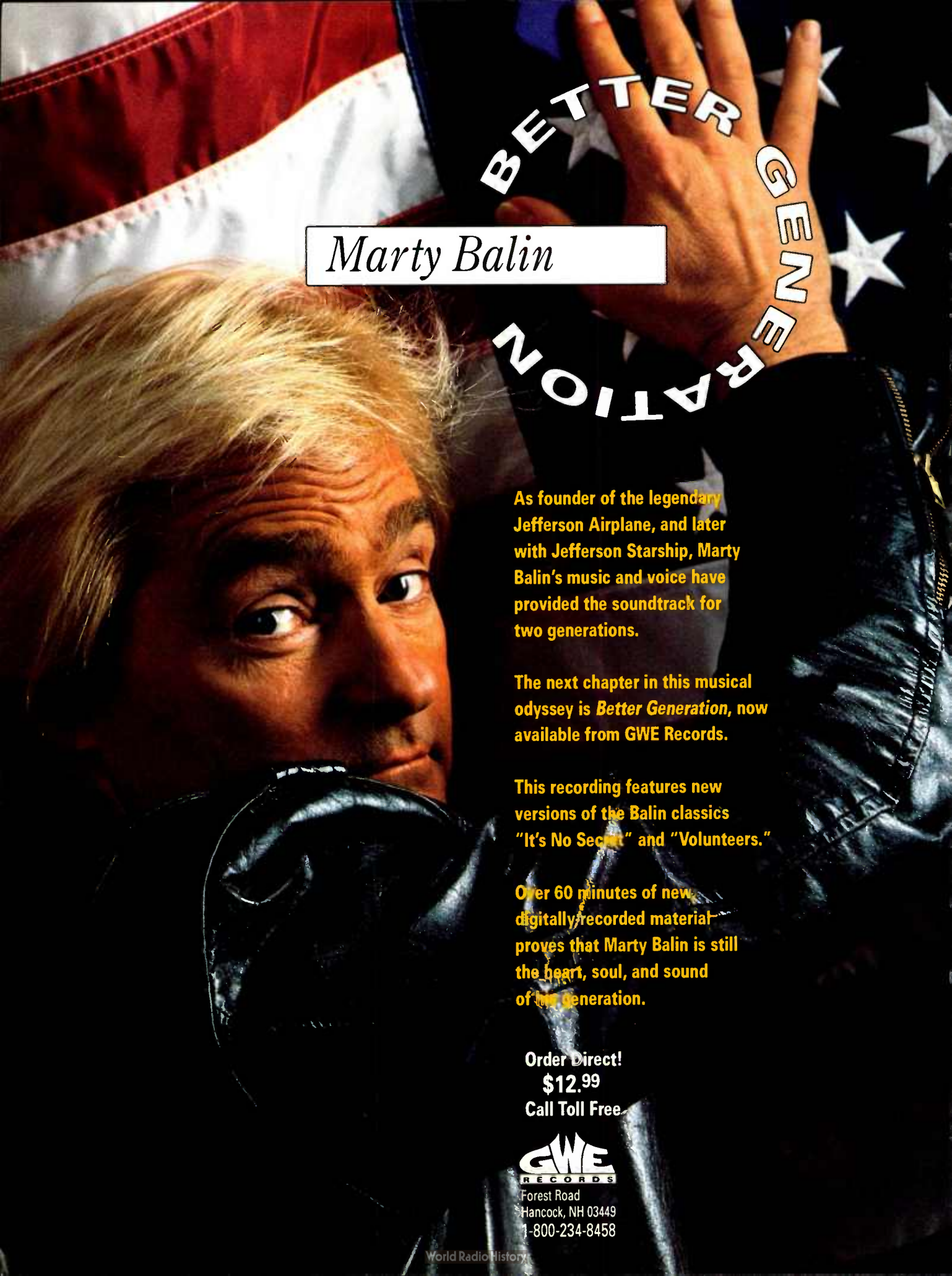
"Do you ever regret that you didn't spend your life playing jazz?"

"No. No, I don't. Because if I hadn't done what I did, which is the reason you interviewing me now, I don't think I'd have been more outstanding as a jazz drummer than any of the great jazz drummers from New Orleans we been talkin' about: Vernel Fournier, Eddie Blackwell, Charles 'Hungry' Williams. It's nice to be recognized as special instead of just one of a bunch."

Earl patted his pockets. "God, I wanna cigarette. I quit, but if I don't take a drag now and then I'll die of hypertension faster than I would from emphysema. I have withdrawal and get so frustrated. Talking to you today, I start feeling stupid not to remember things that are very important. It makes me sound blasé and I'm not, it's just that it's so damn long ago and there is so much of it."

"CALL ME 'ROUND NOON, I DON'T THROW UP till then" were his parting words after lunch, but when the rental car pulled up at one the next afternoon, Earl was in fine fettle despite having been out all night: ready to do the festival big-time. Headliners Los Lobos were booming from a big outdoor stage as Earl made straight for the jazz tent, rolling backstage like a southern diplomat, a world-champion hang-out king prowling in and out of trailers, snagging hors d'oeuvres, roaring with laughter and hugging and waving; huddling with Nicholas Payton the awesome 17-year-old trumpeter and New Orleans jazz and R&B greats Harold Batiste, Earl Turbinton and John Boudreaux, hailing a severe-looking Ellis Marsalis with his 14-year-old son Jason. "Hey Ellis, where's Dolores?" Sotto voce: "She's Ellis' wife, *fantastic* woman, a ramrod, kept those boys from getting a big head. Ellis and I are alike; we love to play a waltz."

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band were midset, threatening to levitate the jazz tent. A quiet, ironic voice said, "Hello, Mr. Palmer" and Earl wheeled around to face David Hidalgo of Los Lobos. "Hey!" hollered Earl. "I know this guy from when he hung around the union!" Hidalgo's bandmates Louie Perez and Steve Berlin arrived, fresh from their set, with an [*cont'd on page 95*]



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Scott Henderson and Gary Willis

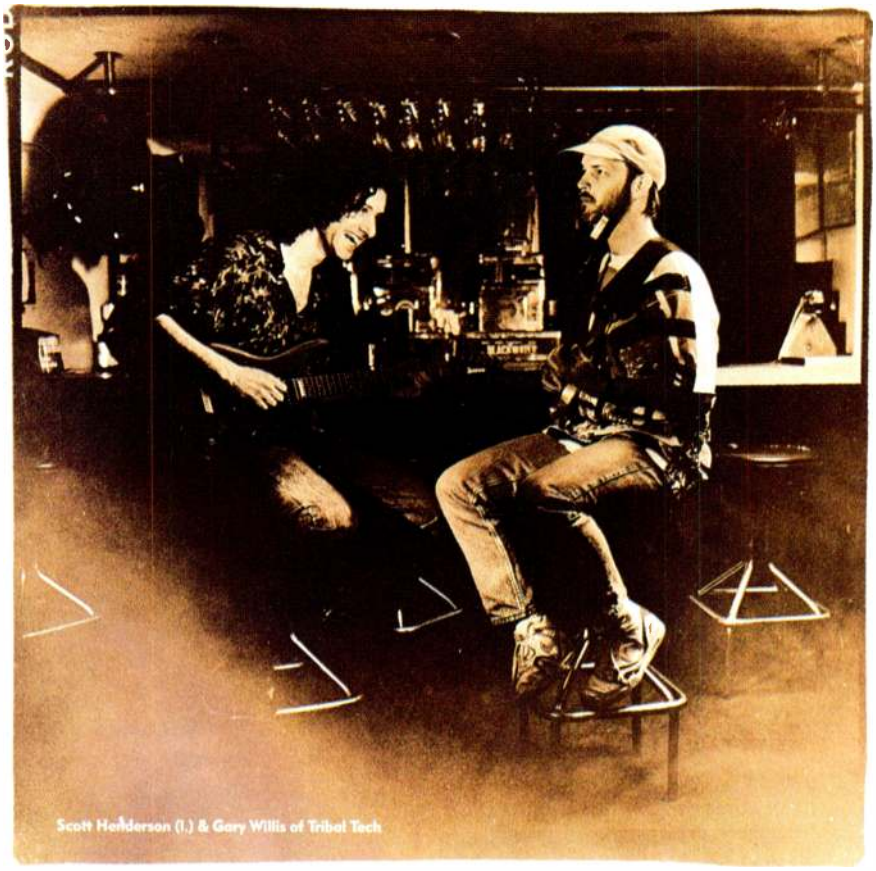
Tribal Tech's perfect fusion

By MATT RESNICOFF

LIKE JACO PASTORIUS, SCOTT Henderson played heavy jazz with Joe Zawinul, infusing the music with shards of Deep Purple and Hendrix. And like Jaco, Gary Willis ripped intense fretless basslines alongside Wayne Shorter, but Gary never really flew off the handle. There's a lot to suggest that Scott—boyish, impish, a guy who'll grab his wang-bar on a Monk tune or miss rehearsal to seek some nookie—represents the spirit of Jaco without the personal disorders. He and writing partner Gary are versed in high musical syntax, but never loosened their grip on rock; they're fusion musicians for the '90s, who came up, under and around the most unpredictable leaders in electric jazz. Perhaps that's why their band Tribal Tech's music is at times fiercely reminiscent of Weather Report. Or why their records—*Spears*, *Dr. Hee*, *Nomad* and the new *Tribal Tech*—so smoothly integrate incredible improvising with thoughtful composition.

Tribal Tech's tunes aren't deliberately chops-based, just intelligently melodic and rich in harmony. "Melodies should not only be playable, but singable—memorable in some way," says Gary. "Certain things we write are there because we can play them, and don't center around melodies, but usually a tune is used because of melodic content." With Henderson on guitar synthesizer, any sound or composed part is assignable to anyone. "I write on guitar," says Scott, "but I'll write things that aren't necessarily going to be played on guitar. I use a Macintosh computer, so when I finish, it's all synth. Then I figure out what's going to be transferred."

The ornery bassline under the second melody of *Tribal Tech*'s "Wasteland" came through Gary's left hand on a keyboard, got entered into the computer and was then shaped for the tune. "It wasn't till we got to the studio that I realized how hard it was, that it wasn't a natural electric bass thing at all. It spans more octaves and jumps around a lot." Scott laughs, "I do the same thing. I'll write something, and because I've entered it in slow motion, I don't realize how hard it is until we bring it up to tempo." Melodies may suggest themselves in real time, but for Henderson the Mac simplifies the selection: "When



Scott Henderson (l.) & Gary Willis of Tribal Tech

Photograph: Aldo Mauro

you're writing on a four-track and can't slow the thing down, you might waste a lot of time learning some line you're not even gonna use because you find out you don't like it. With the Mac you can speed it up and decide whether you like it before you go through the trouble."

Splitting the emphasis between blowing and structure affords the musicians to have an off night and still be presentable. Onstage as Tribal Tech, they make a good case for experimentation, finding variety in common forms and feels. "There's probably not as many different styles of blues as jazz, if you think of us as jazz," Gary says, "but at the same time, there's *tons* more than 12-bar." Scott adds, "I play blues all the time, but by knowing which pentatonic scales work over which chords, I'm able to play blues licks over just about any progression. John Scofield has always got that pentatonic thing happening; he may play an F pentatonic blues scale over a G alt dominant chord, which gives you a great altered scale, but at the same time you can play your blues licks."

When working with modes, Scott prescribes using the parent major key as a reference. After all, why learn something as a lydian dominant when all you need to do is go up a fifth and play a melodic minor scale? "I'd rather learn the modes of a melodic minor scale and just know that scale and how it can be transposed, than learn the intervals of seven completely unique scales." That can sometimes be applied to the analysis of progressions. "In modern harmony a chord can go to any chord if it sounds good," he explains. "'Sub Aqua' is basically in C# minor and A major, but every once in a while a Dsus or a Bflat minor pulls it out. Basically you look at it as you would a Wayne Shorter tune in *The Real Book*: a chord at a time."

Gary articulates their soloing concept: "I try to center around the communication of an idea. Keys and chords may change, but if you're trying to say something, you just follow the idea throughout. The idea has a set of shapes and intervals, so once you start manipulating it through the changes, you can't think about scales and chords—you just know what it is on the instrument and go with it." "That's the most melodic way to play," adds Scott. "Everyone learns chords and scales, and you *have* to, but the idea is most important. To rip off Scofield: Say you have a Gmin and a Bflat min chord; instead of just ripping a G minor scale and then a Bflat minor scale, over the Gmin you can play a C, then an A, then a D, with some little rhythmic pattern on those three notes. Then, when the chord switches to Bflat min, you can keep the C, but you have to change the A to an Aflat and the D to Dflat." "Or you take the whole idea up a half-step," Gary suggests, "but you maintain the integrity of the shape. That's what makes any good melody, that repetition."

"That's what you call playing *through* chord changes instead of playing over changes," Scott continues. "Your idea remains no matter what happens harmonically, and you develop that motif through your solo. That's the highest level of jazz improvisation: making a phrase happen, phrases that relate to each other, rather than just blowing lines aimlessly. The notes might be correct, but you're not saying anything. It's like reading a dictionary instead of a novel: There's no sentences and paragraphs."

Gary is a powerhouse soloist, but his comp lines are just as exciting because he makes clever use of the bass' predisposition as a single-note instrument. His linear approach involves strong beats and weak beats, and implying harmony within a line over time. "You confine yourself to whole- and half-steps and make lines work without jumping around chord or scale shapes," he explains, "just getting inside a line and being able to smoothly connect it through any changes. When you're dealing with diatonic seventh chords on any instrument, you're never more than a whole step away from a chord tone. With that in mind, you should be able to create lines that satisfy chord tones on one and three, using only half-steps and whole-steps. Once you start using those half-steps and whole-steps, eighth notes instead of quarter notes, and putting the strong beat on the downbeat of each quarter note, then these lines become useful solo ideas. Then you start communicating. You're not thinking, 'Here's my A arpeggio, here's my A scale'—you're inside the line."

"Same on guitar," adds Scott. "If you're learning lines and shapes, you're learning a vocabulary. And when that becomes so implanted in your brain that it's subconscious, then it's like speaking. You're talking, but you're not thinking about the meaning of the words. You don't go, 'Let's see, I'll use "words," then I'll use "using,"' you just relay your thoughts. And I don't even think everybody needs a great vocabu- [*cont'd on page 78*]

Tribal Tech

SCOTT and new bolt-on convert Gary are Ibanez men, and prefer soft basswood bodies for resonance. Willis blows on fretless and fretted five-string basses—he likes GHS Progressive strings—with a Carver power amp and Yamaha bass and t.c. electronic 1144 preamps. He uses his very own Willis-built cabs with JBL E140 speakers. Scott currently digs the Lee Jackson Perfect Connection preamp for its fat lead scream; his clean tone is by Boogie's Studio Preamp through a 295 power amp. A Roland GM70 converter triggers Henderson's Yamaho TX812, S-550 sampler and Korg M1 synth, which run through Ibanez SDR-1000 delays, a Lexicon LXP-5 for pitch-change, an ADA STD-1 for chorus, and Peavey power amps—all blended with a TOA mixer. Tribal Tech keyboardist SCOTT KINSEY uses a Roland D-70 and a Korg Wavestation; KIRK COVINGTON beats Tama drums, Zildjian cymbals and Remo heads.

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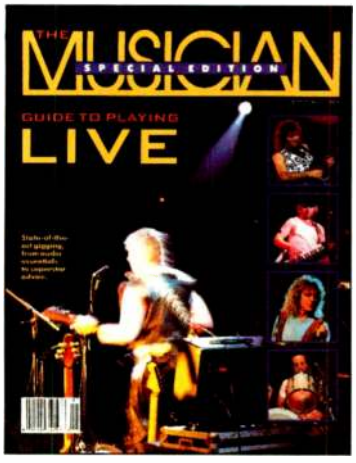

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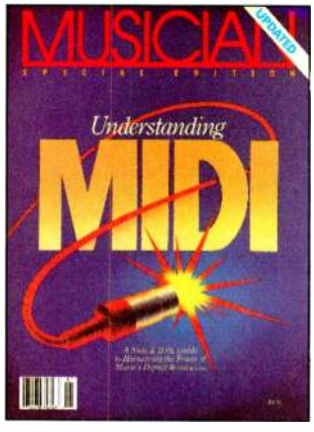

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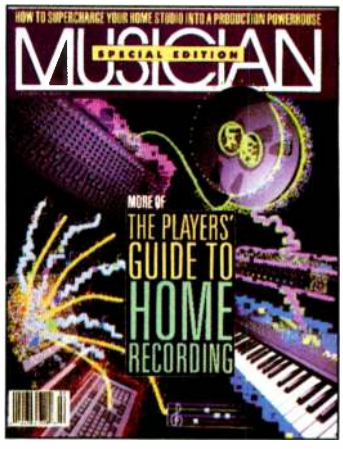

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Matt Sorum and Lars Ulrich Love You Live

Playing out with Guns N' Roses and Metallica

By Rick Mattingly

MIDWAY INTO HIS DRUM SOLO at a Guns N' Roses concert, Matt Sorum brings the volume way down. As he gets softer, Sorum physically leans into his drumkit as though he's trying to get inside the drums, trying to find the source of their sound. Having seemingly located it at whisper level, he starts to coax it back up, his torso straightening and his arms raising higher and higher. As the level reaches *fortissimo*, Sorum's back is arched as if the sheer intensity of sound is pushing him up and away from his instrument.

When it comes to playing live, any good hard-rock drummer knows that even a simple beat's got a lot more power and conviction if you play it without your shirt on. But Matt Sorum's adventure into dynamics illustrates a more musical facet of stage vs. studio: You can play a lot softer live than you can on record.

"In the studio," says Matt, "I was taught to play loud and louder. You always want to get the best sound out of the drumkit, which involves hitting it hard. Live, you can be a little more dynamic—I like to bring it way down, because it really makes an impact. In the studio it doesn't really come off like it does live."

Metallica's Lars Ulrich agrees. "If you start getting real dynamic in the studio," he says, "it just sounds like you're taking the drums down in level. Very few drummers can actually pull that off. Ian Paice comes to mind. He was pretty dynamic on some of the early Purple stuff, bringing it up and down in level and attitude.

"Matt is a very dynamic drummer live," Ulrich continues. "I spent a lot of time with him on the road when he was in the Cult and they were supporting us. My dynamics aren't as extreme as his, but Metallica is experimenting with a couple of things on the current tour where we're going to bring things down a bit."

One thing, says Lars, that can severely limit your ability to get soft live is the use of gates. "I'll do the simplest kind of build-up," he says, illustrating his point by playing straight 8th notes on the snare and a tom, going from soft to loud. "But a lot of times the gate is set so tight that it doesn't open up until three-quarters of the way through—which doesn't give me a lot of confidence in being very dynamic live."

Sorum knows the problem well. "On certain tunes, I play a lot of little ghost notes with my left hand, but if the gates weren't open you'd only be hearing the hard accents out front. So it's something I have to work out with the sound man." In other words, you may want to sacrifice ultra-clarity for wider dynamics—don't set the gates too tight.

Tempos are a big issue that both drummers confront again and again in live situations. Conventional wisdom holds that it's okay—and even desirable—to speed things up a bit in live performance because of all the energy generated. But how much faster can you really go?

"To me, tempo's an interesting subject," Ulrich says, "partly because I spent 10 years never giving a shit about it. We did three weeks of pre-production before we recorded our last album, and we got tempos together on all of the songs by playing live. But when we actually went in to make the album, after we recorded each song once or twice and heard them back, we ended up slowing down the click-track tempo on every song anywhere from one to four beats per minute. It seemed to sound better on the record if it were a little slower than the way we'd been rehearsing it."

While Ulrich says that he's no slave to the "it's-gotta-be-just-like-the-record" attitude, he found that his perception of tempo during a live gig could be questionable. "When

Lars (inset) and Matt relax.

Photographs: Deborah Samuel; Ross Halfin (inset)

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you're sitting there playing to four white walls," he says, "you've got a certain feeling about how you're playing and what tempo you're in. You play the same song again, but instead of four white walls you've got 20,000 people staring at your ass. It can't be the same because of that energy flow you get."

He remembers discovering that tempos never feel as fast when you're playing them as they sound when you're listening. "About four months into the ...*And Justice for All* tour, I heard tapes of some of our shows and I found that we were playing some of the stuff *much* faster than I thought we were. I remember telling the band very dramatically, 'Everything is getting played too fast. Things are getting sloppy and out of control.' So I went onstage that night—it was in Fort Myers, Florida—with the intention of slowing down every song in the set. Which is a pretty fuckin' *weird* attitude to go onstage with.

"Controlling your emotions is not something you want to have to think about when you play live," says Lars, "but you have to get used to it. There's a very fine line between playing fast and playing sloppy."

Sorum agrees. "Some nights I play things a bit up. But I try to settle into a good pocket and play it pretty close to the tempo of the album. I've seen bands that play the songs so up that they don't sound the same. Imagine if you saw AC/DC playing 'Back in Black' twice as fast—it just wouldn't have the impact.

"In rock 'n' roll," Sorum says, "a lot of the power is in more backbeat-type medium tempos. Live, I try to keep that kind of song the same tempo as on the album. But the up-tempo, double-time stuff can be just about any speed. If you have a song that's 180 to 200 beats per minute, you can give or take 10 beats per minute and no one will notice."

"I wish I could be as analytical as Matt," laughs Ulrich. "But I do think I'm getting a lot better at controlling the tempos, and every year I feel more in charge of what's going on up there. Still, if you could control things in an arena with 20,000 people the same way you could inside four white walls"—he shakes his head and laughs—"I don't think you'd be human."

The Lowdown

MATT SORUM uses a Yamaha Rock Tour Custom drumset. LARS ULRICH plays a Tama Artstar II kit custom-fitted with Granstar lugs. Both drummers prefer deep, low tuning for live playing. "I go for the thunder," Sorum says, "the low end and bottom. A lot of people think low end gets lost in a live situation, but I've finally got it worked out with our sound man to where I can keep things pretty deep."

Both drummers play Zildjian cymbals. Sorum uses larger ones live for more volume, including 15" hi-hats, a 24" ride, and 19", 20" and 22" crashes. Ulrich likes to keep his stage setup fairly basic, sticking with 17", 18" and 19" medium crashes. "In the studio," he says, "I'll have cymbals all around me. But onstage, you're not going to hear subtle differences when you're playing for 18,000 people, many of whom are not exactly sober."

HENDERSON-WILLIS

[*cont'd from page 74*] lary. A great blues guitarist like Albert King and a great jazz guitarist like Jim Hall are both great musicians because they're able to make a statement. One has what I would call a more eloquent vocabulary. He's no better because he knows more words; he's good because he's able to get a great thought across through what he knows."

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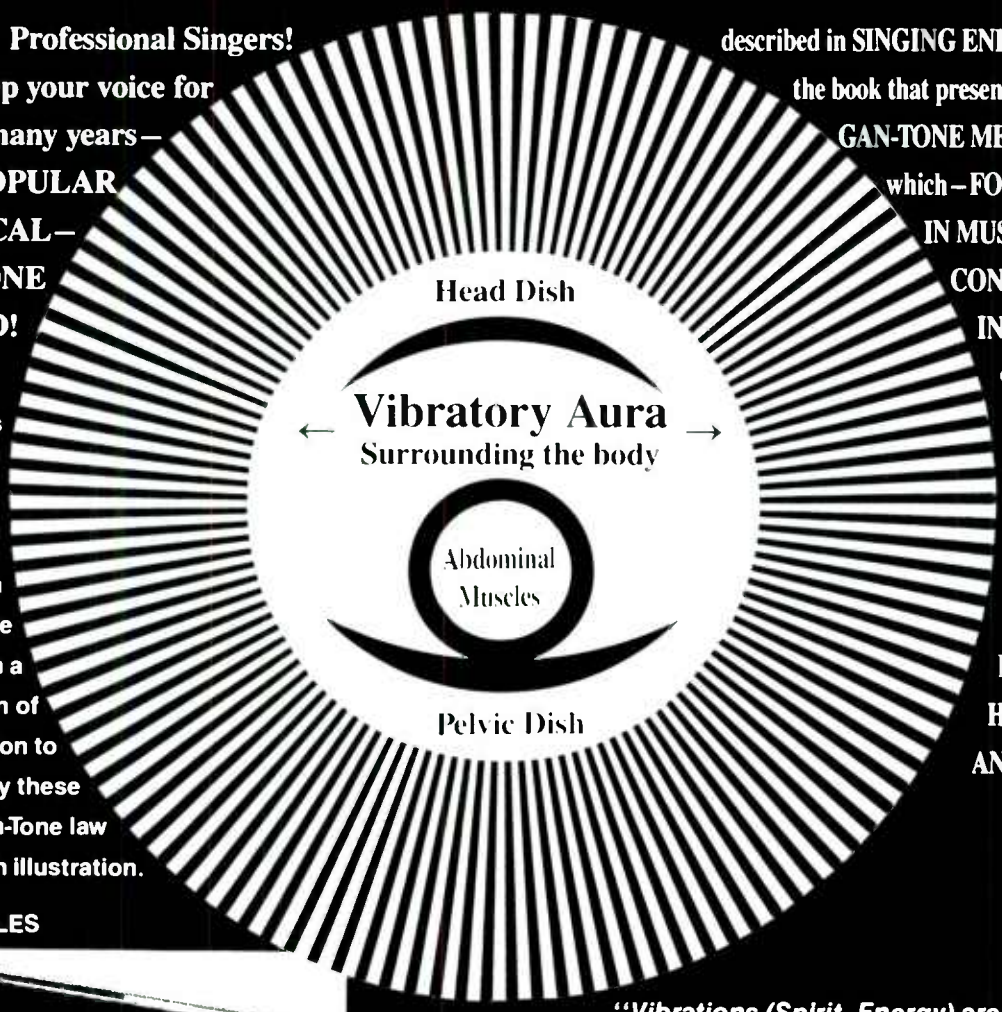

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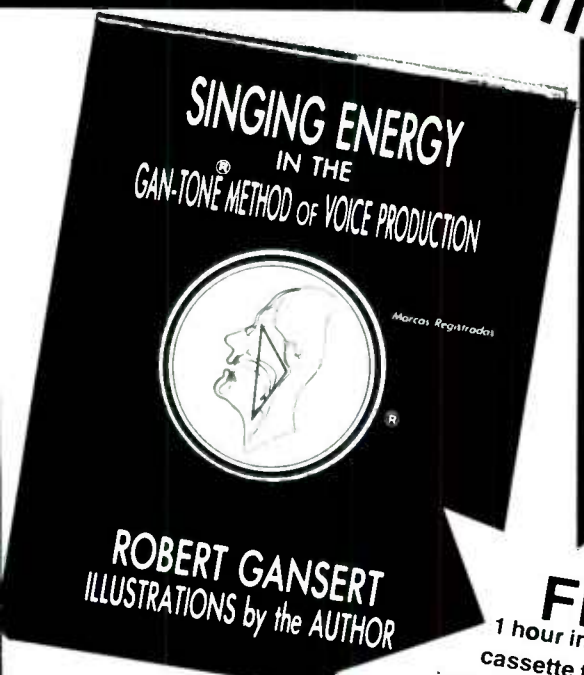

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Microchip Megalomania

Where did synth design go astray? ✧ By Alan di Perna

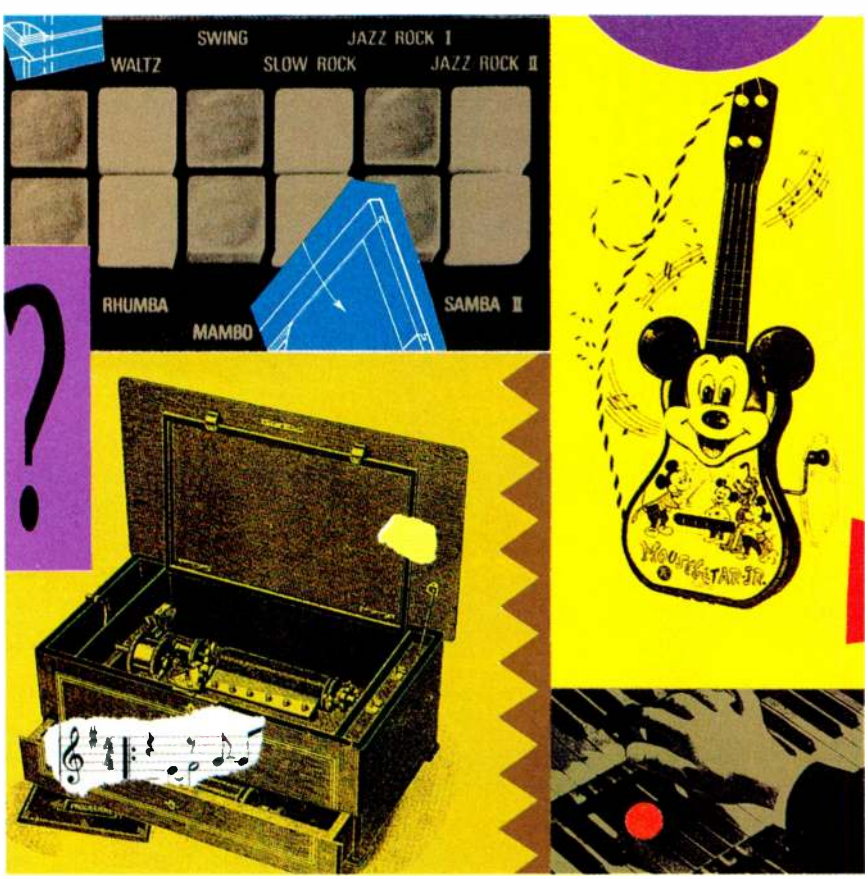
HAS THIS EVER HAPPENED TO you? The ghost of a brilliant melody line flickers in your brain and you rush to the nearest electronic keyboard to flesh it out. But what comes out of the instrument has nothing to do with what your fingers are doing on the keyboard. The synth is playing its own damned melody! Each time you press a key the pitch starts jumping all over the place as shimmering transients sashay across the stereo field. There goes a drum roll! Here comes a bassline! Uh, how'd that little melody of yours go again?

The latest generation of high-tech gear offers no end of choices when it comes to little-used programming features with names like "Microfactal Key Scale Algorithm." But when it comes to basic musical decisions, an alarming percentage of new devices insist on making the choices for you.

This new and nasty strain of microprocessor megalomania takes a few forms. One of them is described above: PCM "multi-wave" sequences disguised as little rap records or movie soundtracks that play back each time you press down a synth key. Looks like the artisan who made your synth wants to usurp your job as artist. Which is pretty much how it goes with two other recent forms of microprocessor pushiness:

- Instant composition/practice boxes whereon "original" songs are built by assembling prefab backbeats, bass riffs, etc. These little wonders will even pick the "correct" chords to go with any melody. All you gotta do is keep that drool under control.
- "Demo sequences" built into workstation synths, drum machines, etc.: Press a button, then sit back and listen to a beloved new synth produce the most retch-inducing session-cat Muzak imaginable. All by way of "showing what it can do," of course. Thanks a lot.

In short, high-tech musical instruments are in serious danger of becoming the player pianos of the future—legitimate heirs to Mom and Pop's living room organ with its built-in Instant Rumba Machine. How could synth designers do this to us? Whatever made them think we wanted them to do it? Let's backtrack and see.



Pretty Limits

"Unlimited Possibilities!" promise nine out of 10 ads for techno gear. But actually, good musical instrument design is all about limitations. A violin's only got four strings, a tuba can't play high C, and a piano won't let you hit two identical E notes simultaneously the way you can on a guitar. The limited "option set" of any instrument is exactly what allows—invites—the individual player's creativity to rise above it all.

The earliest synths were full of limitations: You could only play one note at a time on a MiniMoog. By today's standards, only a few sound parameters could be manipulated. But Dr. Moog selected quite an intriguing little set of them and served them up via some 30 knobs and a bunch of switches. At the time, that seemed like an awful lot to get a handle on, but synth players soon began developing techniques to deal with it. Which brings us to a very important point: Design fosters technique. Trills, hammer-ons and paradiddles were born because trumpet valves, guitar necks and drumsticks are designed the way they are. And technique, of course, is the medium by which ideas in the musician's head become actual music. The guitar, trumpet, keyboard or whatever is merely a tool, or, to give it its proper name, an instrument.

A whole litany of techno miracles followed the MiniMoog. First polyphony, then

Illustration: Bob Hambly

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microprocessor patch memory and then—with the introduction of the DX7 in 1983—parameter-style programming. This is when the front panel knobs went away. The options became so numerous that you could no longer have a separate knob for each one. For the first time since humans began using their limbs to make music, the tactile, spatial connection between player and instrument was broken. Between the musician's mind and hand was inserted a computer interface: a tiny screen and one "master fader." It was a tradeoff: Sounds were now created in a "virtual space" much larger than any actual space could practically be. But the only access to this virtual vastness was through a tiny keyhole.

Preset for Profit

Since things were getting so tricky, the manufacturers figured the thing to do was to load up that nice microprocessor memory with "killer" preset sounds created at the factory. This way, musicians who weren't "smart" enough to program the machines would still want to buy them. It worked. People began using these new synths like fancy tab organs—just punching up the preset sounds and playing. In the process they inherited the sonic tastes of the people who programmed the presets. It was the end of the first, wildly experimental, underground era of synth pop. Goodbye Residents. Hello Madonna.

Not that this was totally evil. The birth of synthesis had arbitrarily saddled keyboardists with sound programming responsibilities. Now they could go back to being keyboardists—their primary technique. Confronted with an overwhelming set of programming options, they limited themselves to the presets.

So why did people keep making synths with all the deep programming facilities of a DX7? Because DX7s sold like mad. This was the beginning of MIDImania. Almost anything with MIDI plugs was an instant moneymaker. And the DX7 was Queen of the MIDI Prom. As a result, it was canonized whole: Every feature was sacred.

The parameter programming scheme introduced by the DX7 is still with us today. What's evolved is the way sounds are generated by synths. Now we've got PCM sampling, additive, AFM and lots more FM spinoffs. Also, built-in effects processors and sequencers have arrived in a big way. Which means we've got pages [*cont'd on page 95*]

Performance

Soundgarden Variety

By JIM MACNIE

FOR ABOUT 10 YEARS NOW, EVER SINCE HÜSKER DÜ, DIN HAS BEEN IN. SOME THRASH BANDS TAKE their ruckus around a racetrack. Others slow down until the chug of each individual combustion can be heard. Soundgarden go both ways, searching for the place where a dull roar isn't so dull. At what tempo—oozing or bristling—is Soundgarden most effective?

WHAT
Soundgarden
WHERE
Warehouse, 429 Greenwich St., New York City
WHEN
October 17, 1991

Running through songs from their new disc *Badmotorfinger*, Soundgarden worked both ends of the spectrum. Guitarist Kim Thayil has thought hard about how thick he wants his power chords to be (the thickest), and thanks to some open-tuning tactics, created layer upon layer of density with one or two strums. ("The strings are looser too, so the vibrating frequency makes it sound heavier," he explained.) When vocalist Chris Cornell—looking like an emaciated Carlos Santana—strapped on his axe and made with additional downstrokes, Soundgarden had some heavy-duty droning going on.

Still, even though the rhythm section of drummer Matt Cameron and bassist Ben Shepherd did an inspired job of keeping the beat buoyant, tedium eventually reared its ugly head. The band certainly isn't embarrassed by their allusions to grandiose '70s rock—their sound unabashedly stems from Zep's garden—but such a course risks a cul-de-sac.

"The decision to slow things down came from other bands trying to go faster and faster," says Thayil. "It got to a point where speed made things sound generic. We try to make sure that the song sounds natural at that tempo; if not, it will be strained. For us, playing slow is brooding and cruel: Every note is felt, kind of like a Chinese water torture."

Far more interesting is what happens when Soundgarden kicks out the jams. "Rusty Cage" got the place cranked quick, its circular guitar lines inspiring a newfound exuberance in Cornell's operatic singing. ("I feel like shit and almost didn't show up tonight," explained the sick singer, "but A&M threatened to replace me with Val Kilmer.") Here their execution was amazingly accurate, with Cameron and Shepherd's intricacies giving the listener plenty to chew on while Thayil's two-fisted guitar work slapped the crowd back. The more the beats were accelerated, the greater the band distanced themselves from the ordinary.

In the end, it didn't matter that nary a word Cornell bayed could be understood. Lyrical content—psychic worries, ceaseless frustration—seems almost superfluous in Soundgarden's music. "The idea that it can all explode any second is attractive," says the guitarist. "Allowing room for chaos makes a song dynamic. There's a degree of instability and volatility that, at least live, we play with quite a bit."

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Digital Dementia Hits AES

WHO WILL BE THE MAJOR PLAYERS IN the upcoming digital recording technology boom? There were plenty of hints at this year's AES (Audio Engineering Society) Convention in New York. All the hot digital formats were in on the action, including DAT and direct-to-hard disk, for both big-budget pros and home studio noodlers. Almost as intriguing as the new gear were announcements of leapfrogging personnel shifts involving several key manufacturers. First off, longtime **Tascam** product developer Dave Oren has gone over to arch rivals **Fostex**. Oren had a nurturing role in Fostex's big AES entry: the PD-2. It's the first portable DAT with time code, it's got a packet of features aimed at the film location recording market, and at $10,950 no one would ever call it cheap. The PD-2 was at the head of a new product rollout that also includes a swift little under-$8000 24-channel/12-buss recording console with MIDI automated mute capabilities called, logically enough, the 2412.

Helping fill Oren's old slot at Tascam is one-time Captain Beefheart roadie Paul Young, late of **Roland**'s new pro audio division and a prime mover in the development of Roland's digital hard disk recording system, the DM-80, which was also on view as a working prototype at AES. Having just joined the Tascam team, Young's influence is yet to be reflected in any actual product. But parent company **Teac** *did* have a nice little affordable portable DAT, the DA-P20. This was shown alongside Tascam's latest Portastudio, the 464 ($899), which features low-impedance XLR mike inputs, and a new recording console called the M-3700: eight-buss, fully automated with SMPTE read/write capabilities, the 24-channel version goes for $12,999 while the 32-channel one sells for $14,999. Yet another attention-grabber at the Tascam booth was the new ATS-500, a full-blown SMPTE synchronizer for just $799.

But before we quit talking DAT, let's not forget the King of Digital, **Sony**, who introduced several new DATs at AES, including an updated version of their industry-standard portable, the TCD-D10 PROII, and a new affordable professional DAT, the PCM-2300. The latter provides sampling frequencies up to 48k and an unbalanced IEC-950 type-I digital input and output—a nice package for $1590. But just to put temptation in everyone's path, **Otari** whipped the doily off *their* affordable pro DAT, the under-$2300 DTR-7.

One thing about all new digital gear: There sure are a lot of different, not-always-compatible interface "standards" for hooking it all together. Luckily, **Lexicon** introduced a very timely gadget, the LFI-10 digital interface standard converter ($1995), that'll take just about any type of digital input and convert it into just about any other kind of digital output.

Nosing around AES, it was nice to see a lot of manufacturers fulfilling digital promises made at earlier trade gatherings. **Alesis** delivered the goods on their previously announced ADAT system. Serving up eight tracks of digital recording on super-VHS cassettes, it's a sure bet to become the machine of choice for budget-minded home recordists at just $3995. **Korg**'s newly formed pro audio division also came across with a working model of their eight-track digital recording/editing system, the SoundLink, which was first introduced at last year's AES. This is a more high-end proposition than ADAT, but for those who can afford the $35,000 for

Photography: Susan Goines

a 670-mByte base system, it's well worth it. It's pretty much the same scenario with **Steinberg**'s Topaz, a four-channel magneto-optical digital recording system that was first seen in prototype way back at summer NAMM for '89.

Also new from Steinberg is Cuebase Audio, a version of the Cuebase Mac MIDI sequencer that can run in tandem with **Digidesign**'s digital hard disk systems: Pro Tools, Sound Tools or Audio Media. Digidesign, of course, introduced the whole concept of manipulating digital audio and MIDI sequences in the same computer environment. They did so by teaming their technology with **Opcode**'s Vision sequencer. Which was fine, but it's nice to be able to run digital audio with alternative sequencers like Cuebase. *And* Performer. **Mark of the Unicorn**'s popular sequencer program is now also up and running with the Digidesign stuff, going under the name Digital Vision.

Other new MIDI innovations at AES had nothing to do with digital audio but were

quite cool in their own right. Like Opcode's new Studio 5, a Mac MIDI interface with 15 separate 16-channel MIDI lines. So let's see, 15 times 16 makes...yow...240 MIDI channels! **Peavey**'s got a sporty new MIDI controller keyboard, the DPM C8, with 88 piano-action keys and a 3.5" disk drive for saving preset data from the C8 itself and any MIDI slaves connected to it. Along with the usual wheels and sliders, there's a fun, pressure-pad XYZ controller that lets you "draw" envelopes and other parameter modulations with your fingertip.

E-mu chose AES as the U.S. launch site for the keyboard version of the ever-popular Proteus. The Proteus Master Performance System boasts a five-octave velocity- and pressure-sensitive keyboard. Meanwhile, synth/sampler manufacturer **Ensoniq** made an interesting lateral move by coming out with their first-ever multi-effects processor, the DP-4. Up to four different instruments can be plugged in and bussed to different sectors of this cavernous machine, or all that processing power can be put to work on a single instrument.

But the slicker digital technology gets, the more we need good microphones, monitors and other traditional gear to go with it. Sony wowed everyone with the world's first self-cooling microphone: the C-800G. They discovered that some earlier Sony tube mikes sound best at lower temperatures, so they enlisted the aid of a heat-sensitive semi-conductor called a Peltier device to keep the C-800G cool in the hottest of sessions. Not a cheap trick at $5600, but in the places where this mike's going nobody's counting. Elsewhere in high-end mikedom, **Audio-Technica** unveiled their new studio condenser model, the AT4033, and drafted noted record producer Phil Ramone to sing the mike's praises at a party held at New York recording studio the Power Station.

There were lots of great-sounding new monitors at AES, but first prize goes to **JBL**'s 4200 Series, whose portly shape may look funny but is specially designed to keep sound from bouncing wantonly off mixing console surfaces.

Look for more detailed ruminations on some of these products in upcoming issues of *Musician*. **ALAN DI PERNA**

Tube Stakes

DEMETER WINS THE BLINDFOLD TEST

Tubes make electric guitars sound better, so why not everything else? That's the question posed by Demeter Amplification, makers of the new VTMP-2 Tube Microphone Preamplifier. They invited me down to Brooklyn Recording (in the heart of Hollywood) to hear the answer. We A/Bed the VTMP-2 with the built-in mike preamps on the studio's Neve console. The source material was acoustic guitar and vocal into a Neumann U47 monitored on custom TAD enclosures driven by Yamaha P2700 power amps. I was fully prepared to produce the requisite fake orgasm: "Oh wow, guys, what a difference!" Instead I discovered there really was a discernible difference: a good one too. Midrange presence increased notably with the VTMP-2. Higher transients seemed to drop a bit in level, but this was more than recompensed by an overall sense of 3-D spaciousness. We got a similar boost in toastiness when we tried Demeter's new Stereo Tube Direct Box (SDTB-2) on that cruelest of trials: electric guitar direct into the board. Chalk up one more for vacuum tubes. **ALAN DI PERNA**

SOUND OFF!

MUSICIANS AGAINST CENSORSHIP

Rumor has it that the cartoon Little Red Riding Hood is on the censorship chopping block. Maybe the wolf-eating grandma represents the woes of urban strife. Perhaps the Wizard of Oz appears a little too hyper to be drug-free. Alice in Wonderland got stoned with an insect. The Roadrunner crushed the coyote's head and today's lyrics are polluting our children's minds. That's what the censors say.

The arts in question seem to have pushed the boundaries of morality too far for middle-minded America's taste. With the state of public affairs I must admit to my moments of doubt over the possible forever future, but does denying or impeding the arts journey really heal the wounds of ignorance? I don't know. Ignorance seems to breed fear, fear becomes anger, anger becomes suppression and finally suppression becomes censorship—or a warning sticker. From what I've seen the sticker isn't a deterrent—not at all. In fact, it appears to have become an aphrodisiac for the young people who wish to distort reality for a moment, a label for private rebellion. I hope we haven't reached the point of needing a warning sticker to remind our parents of their duties. Isn't it a guardian guideline to cover all aspects of life with your children?

The concept of censorship becomes cloudy to our young people who see daytime soap operas and beer commercials displaying blatant sexual images that *far* exceed their favorite bands' album covers. Editing the arts or warning people of their possible insult only intrigues the curious—especially when the "real world" has more profanity and political corruption than the most alarming rap songs. Our community leaders are supposed to lead our youth from the dark corners of hatred and sexual abuse by giving them enough support to make moral judgements while teaching them the repercussions of good and bad, the side effects of their actions. By attempting to edit their naturally inquisitive minds we cast even more shadows on the world's problems. Perhaps our hands have been held too long.

Society's hypocrisy makes the fine line between good and evil grow even thinner. The concerned citizens who need to label art immoral may want to spend more time with their children explaining the source of repressed violence and sexual perversion in today's art rather than exercising their frustrations through censorship.

If you're angry with the wicked ways of the world don't close the door to communication and martyr the untruth by censorship. Open your hearts to understanding. Only then can the remedy to society's ills be practiced. That is your goal, isn't it?

When a tree falls in a forest does it make a sound if no one is around to hear it? Does it matter? The tree has still fallen. Would offensive lyrics affect the world if no one was allowed to hear them? Maybe. But that's not the issue. Artists will always want to delve into the darker side of humanity—people will always be hungry for a look inside. So let's start at the root—a broadening of our horizons through education, not a suppression of modern thought and an unaware nation.

Dan Ree

Wolf-in-the-Box

The Howlin' Wolf Chess Box
(Chess/MCA)

UP WELLS A GRAINY WAIL, TERRIFIED AND TERRIFYING—SOUNDS SOMEthing like a haunted vacuum cleaner—and it swells and swells until it distorts Sam Phillips' Ampex one-track as if the frightened particles were trying to leap off the tape, and the voice gathers itself for a split second and explodes—"*wh-hoo-hoo!!*"—into a howl that stands Phillips' neck hairs up. Big Foot Chester has cut his first record.

Howlin' Wolf, who learned from Charley Patton, who learned from unknown giants, had three voices: a vicious sandpaper rasp he got by pinching his only slightly more sonorous "normal" voice, and an eerie nocturnal moan about as close to its original model—Jimmie Rodgers' carefree yodel—as the Hound of the Baskervilles is to a beagle puppy. Voices One and Three were the Wolf's calling cards.

It's said that Sam Phillips considered Howlin' Wolf, not Elvis, his great discovery. In 1951 and '52 Phillips and Ike Turner cut maybe a few dozen sides on Wolf. Fifteen of Phillips' open the three-CD, 75-song *Howlin' Wolf Chess Box*, and I have to admit they're where my special affection lies. "Moanin' at Midnight" (that

Photograph: Michael Ochs Archive

amazing first record), "Just My Kind," "Mister Highway Man," "Crazy 'bout You Baby"...they careen, pound, threaten to fly apart from the momentum of Willie Steele's whackadaddy, log-like snare and Willie Johnson's electric guitar. There's all sortsa theories about Johnson's sound—someone dropped his amp; car ran over it; whatever, his chording has a heavy-metal crunch that wasn't heard again for two decades and his single-note leads are knifelike, fat and sizzling: *satisfying*.

The Wolf began life as Chester Burnett, from West Point, Mississippi, and grew into a six-four, 275-pound, well, presence. When he moved up to Chicago—after the Memphis sides—he became the urban blues audience's Number Two man, id to Muddy Waters' ego. At Chess Records his sound slowly changed. The Memphis sound had been spare, a jump-band swing. After a transition period, including "Evil," "Smokestack Lightning," such-like, the Burnett oeuvre thickened into a menacing midtempo crawl. It's Wolf's best-known stuff: "Back Door Man," "Spoonful," "Ain't Superstitious," "Tail Dragger." Hubert Sumlin, who replaced Johnson, satisfies me less—too many notes, too many mannerisms, like all those glisses—but that's personal; whatever your taste, you'd have to be deaf not to respond to Wolf's Chicago classics. The wonderful stuff thins out—the third disc's got "Killing Floor," "300 Pounds of Joy" and not that much else—and it's moving to listen to Wolf near the very end, wily but kindly, gentle at last, hashing out changes with Eric Clapton on 1970's *London Sessions*. Then go back South, to the beginning. Your stereo starts to vibrate, to pulsate, to give unholy birth...*to the Wolf*. For me, "Moanin' at Midnight" is one of the great moments in audio history. **—Tony Scherman**

Jeff Beck

◆

Beckology

(Epic)

JEFF BECK'S CRITICS LIKE TO REGARD HIM AS A cryptic man with a fleeting interest in his craft, and figure the world would be better off if he spent less time in the garage and more time on the road. The point is missed. Beck just wouldn't be Beck if the guitar weren't a secondary, even tertiary consideration. A lot of what he does happens because it feels good to him, and if anyone else understands it, that's the gravy. Hear it in the obscure recordings with the Tridents, where one moment he's supple and twisting, by the next pure caterwaul. Jeff Beck, barely out of his teens, was a class act, in a class by himself.

The three-volume *Beckology* demonstrates that there are three phases of Jeff Beck: finding his thing, refining his thing, redefining his thing. Repetitive riff-oriented music was a clean slate for his vehement, tonally rich playing, and early Yardbirds tracks help underscore idiosyncrasies like his perennial tendency to rush the beat, to get into a line he couldn't quite get out of. The set traces the evolution of "Shapes of Things" through the 'Birds and then the Jeff Beck Group, where attacking the guitar became Beck's cathartic substitute for executing precisely what he was hearing. He began playing his own rhythm, wiggling his wiggle stick and tapping on the fretboard. Longer songs and headier atmospheres found him abandoning feedback for more controllable effects like the voice box, the wah-wah and raw technique, but injecting that attitude into the writing personalized the context. In that way, "New Ways Train Train" stands out not just for Beck but for its cavernous groove. By the time he got to Beck, Bogert and Appice and before he got to harnessing his chromatics over chord changes, his music was *him*, and he could afford to experiment with form; whatever your take on fusion, producer George Martin did a good thing for longhairs of both kinds by placing electric guitar in "Diamond Dust"'s elegant orchestral context.

A good box is a study in the previously unheard and unheard-*of*; in Beck's case there's never been a glut of the former. Much unreleased material here is from the Yardbirds and BBA periods (no surprise, since Beck under his own direction would seldom record more than an album's worth), and there are wild moments between the "Psycho Daisies" B-side with Jimmy Page, BBA's "Jizz Whizz" and their live shuffle chaos from London. In Appice—here representing all the sublime banality of arena rock—Beck had a drummer who could keep up with his intricate and rolling riffs. The interplay had its lighter side in staccato voice-box silliness and Jeff's prima-donna rant tagging the U.K. single "Wild Thing." (That rogue Beck—mixing himself too low on *Twins*' ripping "Train Kept A'Rollin'" and then doing a languid ballad like "Sleep Walk" for a *Porky's Revenge* soundtrack. After the hair, further dispelment of wonder about Rob Reiner's model for *Spinal Tap*'s Nigel Tufnel.)

I'll take issue with the compiler's inclusion of "I've Been Drinking" at the expense of virtually anything else Beck ever played, much less his vicious ARMS set, "El Becko," any fade solos that may have been cut to fit the vinyl, and especially the "Orange"-era Dylan cover "Tonight I'll Be Staying Here with You." Bob Tench was a better foil anyway; starpower aside, Rod Stewart's shrying along with Beck on the heavier music made for weak contrast. But that's one tight-minded view. Beck is precious precisely because he has little use for being precious. Drama and surrealism come easy, but he's still the guy whose guitar feeds back disruptively during every drum solo here.

—Matt Resnicoff

The Monkees

◆

Listen to the Band

(Rhino)

IF YOU ARE OVER THE AGE OF 38 OR UNDER THE AGE of 34 the very existence of a CD boxed-set retrospective of 80 songs by the Monkees will seem ludicrous to you. If you are between 34 and 38 your attitude towards the Monkees is probably at least a little ambiguous. Chances are you liked them once and then became embarrassed that you did. I remember a DJ in 1969 saying, "Where the heck have all the Monkees fans gone? Are all you guys who love Led Zeppelin the same ones who were requesting the Monkees two years ago?" It was a very funny question because the Led Zeppelin fans were so insulted by it and because, of course, they *were* the same kids. That's the difference between seventh grade and ninth.

The Monkees' first hit single came out in the late summer of 1966 and their TV sitcom debuted that September. In early 1967 they scored their double-sided monster "I'm a Believer"/"(I'm Not Your) Steppin' Stone" and began a domination of Top 40 radio that found not only a succession of singles but many album cuts getting saturation airplay. That spring their show won the "Best Comedy" Emmy. Stung by the criticism that they were phony musicians who relied on studio players, the Monkees began doing concerts and on *Headquarters*, their third album, played the instruments themselves (they weren't very good musicians, but the songs weren't very hard). They followed that LP with memorable pop hits such as "Pleasant Valley Sunday," "Daydream Believer" and "Valleri." In the fall of 1967 they released their fourth album. It had been one year since their first.

In the spring of 1968 their TV show was canceled and for the first time a Monkees single flopped. Although they continued to record—as a quartet, then a trio, then a duo—until early 1970, the Monkees' enormous popularity was over. They had achieved great international success, recorded a substantial body of music and filmed a TV series that is still seen in re-runs 25 years later, all in the year-and-a-half that Bob Dylan was recovering from his motorcycle accident.

Today it seems remarkable that the Monkees were shamed for using session musicians to supplement their own playing. Today we have singers who rely on pitch correctors, bands that come out of machines and pop stars who lip-sync in concert. By today's standards the Monkees were purists. Was the music any good? Again, your age is going to prejudice your answer. The Monkees' music is as much of its time—the year surrounding the summer of love—as were the patriotic hits of World War II. I figured I'd reduce the good stuff on the Monkees box to a 60-minute cassette to play in the car, but the cassette ran out before the good stuff did. If you were between 10 and 14 years old in 1967, you will find that even the bad songs trigger floods of memories (you probably heard them every day that year and have not heard them since). The good songs, mostly but not exclusively Mike Nesmith's, are of a standard that would not embarrass the Byrds, Mamas & Papas or other Monkees peers. And there are two cuts—both sides of the single "Porpoise Song"/"As We Go Along"—that I truly think are great. That 45 knocked me out when I bought it in late 1968, along with the Beatles' white album. But by then no one was listening to the Monkees anymore. What a surprise, 23 years later, to discover that Neil Young, Ry Cooder, Earl Palmer and Danny Kortchmar played on it. And that it still sounds fantastic. **—Bill Flanagan**

Ray Charles

The Birth of Soul
(Atlantic)

"I NEVER CONSIDERED MYSELF PART OF ROCK AND roll...My stuff was more adult...difficult for teenagers to relate to...filled with more despair..." So says Ray Charles in his bio *Brother Ray*, quoted by Robert Palmer in his exemplary booklet essay accompanying this three-CD boxed reissue. And listening to the man sing about pawning his clothes to pay the rent and how "one of these days/There'll be no more sorrow/When I pass away" ("Hard Times," 1955), the phrases dipping down to a strangled yowl or curling up to a sob-like grace note, you take his point.

Subtitled *The Complete Atlantic Rhythm & Blues Recordings, 1952–1959*, these discs trace a narrative familiar to boxed set devotees. The sessions from '52 and '53 show Charles, then in his early 20s, lacking the later soulful *gravitas*, his originality hemmed by a web of influences and a record company anxious to fit him to formula. As the young artist tests his range he offers a different persona on almost each cut: from gospel wailer ("The Sun's Gonna Shine Again," "Sinner's Prayer") to good-time shouter ("Jumpin' in the Morning," "Mess Around"), to wise-beyond-his-years blues singer to rather bald-faced Nat King Cole impersonator.

By the late-'52 New Orleans session, mostly slow blues, the essential Ray had emerged—from here on he's the master of his tangled parts. Along with familiar peaks ("I Got a Woman," "Hard Times," "Hallelujah I Love Her So"), *Birth* collects obscure, equally stunning bits of early Ray like "I Want a Little Girl"—a full lexicon of Charles vocal effects—and the wonderfully anguished "Come Back Baby."

For about the last half of this set Ray is joined by the Raelettes, prompting the dissenting opinion that, on disc at least, they weren't that well used. Female voices contrasting Ray's masculine burliness seems a solid idea, but too often they sound dissociated, a bored backdrop to his uninhibited emoting. Until, that is, the set's final peak, 1959's "What'd I Say, Parts 1 & 2," where Charles and his singers interact with historic impact. It's sexy and it rocks, bridging 30-plus years without effort—just like most of the rest of Ray's stuff.

—Richard C. Walls

Patsy Cline

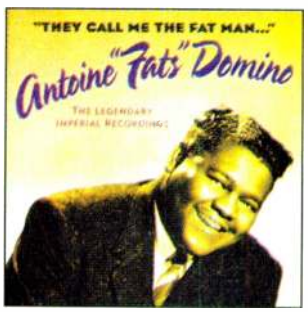
The Patsy Cline Collection
(MCA)

IT SEEMS LIKE PATSY CLINE'S MUSIC AFFECTS PEOPLE one of two ways. There are rabid fans—you'll find them in country bars—to whom "Patsy" is akin to a religious figure. Others are familiar only with her biggest hits, and wonder what all the fuss is about. Both of these camps will find a lot to listen to on *The Patsy Cline Collection*, a four-CD, 104-song career retrospective.

This set splits the middle between Patsy the honky-tonker and Patsy the country/pop crooner. To best illustrate the difference, compare the lazy-shuffling, steel guitar–driven version of her hit "Walkin' After Midnight" to her major-label take, a few years later, on the same song. The rough country edges have been artfully buffed out, replaced by the sappy "walk-a-walk-a-walkin'" background vocals of the Jordanaires. It's interesting to note that the players responsible for the "Nashville Sound" of hits like "Crazy" and "Sweet Dreams (Of You)" were essentially the same musicians who'd kicked Patsy into Wanda Jackson territory on earlier songs like "Turn the Cards Slowly" and "Gotta Lot of Rhythm in My Soul." Like their inner-city counterparts at Motown, Nashville's A-Team took a lot of heat for selling out the purity of the music while they were busy developing an enduring sound of their own.

Under the production wing of Owen Bradley, Cline's move to Music City and a major label could not have been better timed. She had a hillbilly heart and an incredibly rich, surging voice, and was destined to capitalize on this new hybrid style. In 1960, "I Fall to Pieces," a song she didn't want to record, brought her big-time crossover success. Gone were the steel guitar and fiddle that had dominated her earlier, more modest hits on the small, California-based 4-Star label.

Reportedly, Cline often argued with producer Bradley about how to record her songs, and most of the time she lost. But the 13 live cuts included here leave little doubt that when Patsy hit the stage, she was the boss, and her shows were more rockabilly than countrypolitan. If she had to sing a pop song now and then, what the heck. She sang 'em like nobody else, and she liked having hit records, too. Deep down, Patsy may have been a country girl, but she wasn't crazy. **—Peter Cronin**



Antoine "Fats" Domino

"They Call Me the Fat Man..."
(Imperial/EMI)

LIKE THE MISSISSIPPI THAT FLOWS ALONG HIS hometown of New Orleans, Fats Domino's music is a rolling natural force: broad (as is Fats) and calm with the self-assurance of the powerful. The same innate elegance that made Domino the unlikeliest rock 'n' roll star of the '50s has kept his recordings fresh and timeless—not just classic rock, but classical.

EMI's four-CD box is subtitled *The Legendary Imperial Recordings*. For once the adjective is justified. These 100 songs—over half of them hit singles—established Domino as a pop monolith. The public was entitled to change its taste after buying 65 million of his records, but Domino remained faithful to his style: Recording quality aside, it's nearly impossible to distinguish his first sides from those made 15 or 20 years later. *[cont'd on page 94]*

SHORT TAKES

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

GENESIS
We Can't Dance [Atlantic]
Taking a step backwards stylistically, Genesis returns to the epic sprawl of its early work. Rather than weigh this album down, mini-marathons like "Driving the Last Spike" and "Dreaming While You Sleep" prove just as listener-friendly as pop-fodder like "Since I Lost You." How so? Because the main lesson this band has learned since its art-rock days is the importance of being tuneful, and the band's sense of melody and song structure is what holds these songs together. Regression can lead to progress.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN
The Sky Is Crying [Epic]
So what if they're leftovers—Vaughan's second-best is still better than most. Between the boogie bliss of "Wham" and the jazzy groove of "Chitlins Con Carne," there's ample evidence of his versatility. But the highlights are classic SRV: a contemplative Hendrix cover ("Little Wing"), a swingingly casual blues ("Close to You") and an unblushing mea culpa ("Life by the Drop").

NIA PEEPLES
Nia Peeples [Charisma]
For those who find Paula Abdul a little *too* soulful.

NIRVANA
Nevermind [DGC]
Like any group of Sub Pop alums, the guys in Nirvana are connoisseurs of clangor, masters of the crank-and-shred—and that's fine. But because frontman Kurt Cobain knows how to match amplifier overdrive with tough, resilient melodies, what a lesser band would have left as noise is here transformed into exhilaratingly tuneful rave-ups. Add delightfully sour lyrics, and *Nevermind* seems almost irresistible.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Simply Mad about the Mouse [Columbia]
Although this has moments—L.L. Cool J's jovial "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf," for instance, or Ric Ocasek's delightfully dry "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah"—the fact that they come courtesy of an album-length advertisement for the Wonderful World of Licensed Characters makes this *Mouse* a nasty trap indeed.

MATTHEW SWEET
Girlfriend [Zoo]
The songs' evocation of loss and loneliness can be a bit much, but Sweet takes the edge off his angst by grounding each track with all-star guitar playing. Between the way Richard Lloyd's acid-edged solo cuts through the honeyed harmonies of "Evangeline" and the quirky asides Robert Quine adds to the country pickin' in "Winona," it's hard not to love Sweet's *Girlfriend*.

PAUL MCCARTNEY/
CARL DAVIS
Liverpool Oratorio [EMI]
Though it's tempting to joke that this is where "the cute one" becomes "the classical one," in truth McCartney's orchestral debut amounts to little more than overblown show tunes. Damned catchy show tunes. But show tunes nonetheless.

DESI ARNAZ
Babalu Music! [Columbia]
Forget the "I Love Lucy" angle. What makes this album worth owning aren't the TV memories triggered by "There's a Brand New Baby at Our House" or "Straw Hat Song," but the way they reveal the astonishing strength of Desi Arnaz's band and music. Cliché though it may be, "Babalu" is a classic piece of early salsa, while performances like "El Cumbanchero" and "Guadalajara" are enough to make you wish the show offered less comedy and more music.

Got Live If You Want It: After the concert industry's worst year in memory, you wouldn't think that what America wanted most was a bunch of live albums—but then, that's probably why you're not a highly paid record-company executive. Sure, some are real losers—Poison's grab-the-Dramamine ***Swallow This Live*** [Capitol] springs to mind—but not all. ***Weld*** [Reprise], for instance, is a Neil Young and Crazy Horse double disc that makes ***Live Rust*** sound like a garage band rehearsal; though the set list is great, given the balance between classic and recent material, the playing is even better, from the chilling restraint of "Cortez the Killer" to the loose-limbed grunge of "Welfare Mothers." (Noise-aholics will love ***Arc Weld***, which augments the album with a feedback collage that's like ***Metal Machine Music*** with melody.) Equally offhand if not as brilliant is Keith Richards & the X-pensive Winos' ***Live*** [Virgin], which boasts groove-oriented performances of Richards' solo stuff as well as a soulful "Time Is on My Side" (featuring Sarah Dash). Eric Clapton's ***24 Nights*** [Reprise] doesn't break much ground on the song-selection front, but the performances occasionally spit fire, as when Robert Cray and Buddy Guy join in on "Have You Ever Loved a Woman." Slayer's ***Decade of Aggression*** [Def American], though a testament to the band's ferocity, would be much more convincing if its 20 selections didn't sound identical. And in addition to having the best title on this page, Steve Earle and the Dukes' ***Shut Up and Die Like an Aviator*** [MCA] is a perfect example of how country rock oughta be played—with passion, intensity and soul. Great version of "She's About a Mover," too.

BY PETER WATROUS

THE ODEAN POPE
SAXOPHONE CHOIR
The Ponderer [Soul Note]
Nothing like this anywhere: big chunks of coarse, welled reeds propelled by a thundering rhythm section. The

VAN MORRISON

TEXAS TORNADOS

DAVE ALVIN

PALE DIVINE

BRUCE COCKBURN

GOO'S LITTLE MONKEYS

JOHN BEASLEY

DAVID BOWIE

RICHIE SAMBORA

PROCOL HARUM

TEXAS

URBAN DANCE SQUAD

SCHOOL OF FISH

FIVE THIRTY

MARK WHITFIELD

BIG SHOULDERS

DONALD FAGEN
W/MICHAEL MCDONALD

THE DOOS

THIS PICTURE

TALK TALK

KERRI ANDERSON

BRILLIANT ORANGE

SALIF KEITA

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music, which veers from free playing to hard-swinging riffs, sounds like it was written by a saxophonist. That is, the horn writing for the nine saxophonists sounds like Pope's own improvised lines. That's a tradition—Parker did it—and with Pope, the lines and improvisations are post-Coltrane: fluid, gruff, harmonically adventurous.

TOMMY FLANAGAN

Beyond the Blue Bird, Featuring Kenny Burrell [Timeless]

Maybe the success of this album, which is about as good as an album can be, will spur a series like the one Tatum embarked upon in the 1950s, where he'd do sessions with different soloists. Flanagan and his trio host Kenny Burrell, and the mixture is as easy as staying poor. On a ballad like "Yesterdays," the two ease in and out of the tune until the rhythm section sounds like a wave, sweeping everything away. Burrell is precise while Flanagan regularly changes the harmonic colors behind him. Gracious, expansive music.

GARY BARTZ

There Goes the Neighborhood! [Candid]

Bartz is one of those players stuck in the lurch between young and photogenic and old and venerated. Too bad, because he's a burning improviser who can bring a club to a frenzy. The live album smokes from start to finish, with Bartz reinterpreting Coltrane on alto, angular and furious.

ROY ELDRIDGE

After You're Gone [Decca/GRP]

This is one of the best-sounding domestic reissues of 78 material to cross my disc player. It doesn't sound too cleaned up; all the high end and original clarity of the 78s remain. It's also a collection of some of the finest jazz ever recorded, highlighted by 1945's "The Gasser," a pre-bebop hint of things to come, a hard-rocking masterpiece of improvisation. Eldridge was the boss, absolutely overwhelming in the rate of his ideas, unflinching in his dedication to the thrill that the imagination, on public display, can impart.

CHARLES FAMBROUGH

The Proper Angle [CTI]

Happily, two rules are broken on this debut by the bassist Charles Fambrough, who has worked with Art Blakey and McCoy Tyner and even Grover Washington. (1. Avoid jazz albums that have "keyboards" instead of "piano" in the credits. 2. Avoid almost anything on CTI.) For the most part, the soloists—Roy Hargrove, Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Joe Ford, Kenny Kirkland—do what they do best, which is to really play. Fambrough is a fullback of a bassist, tough yet limber, and even on Latin tunes featuring Steve Berrios and Jerry Gonzales, he knows the moves. Less saccharine, and less soprano saxophone, would have been okay, but as it stands this is at once pleasant, thoughtful music.

B.B. KING

The Best of B.B. King Volume One [Virgin]

All hail Virgin for releasing RPM Modern material domestically, including CDs by Etta James and Johnny (Guitar) Watson. B.B.'s package is the best, and it's on these tracks, from the early 1950s through the early 1960s, that we hear a real American hybrid at work. King merges the sound of the Count Basie Orchestra, southwestern swing style, with the sound of Charlie Christian, and King's own delta and gospel background. Rural boy or no, King was slick, absorbing influences from Johnny Moore and the Three Blazers to bebop.

ARTHUR BLYTHE

Hipnotism [Enja]

The return of Arthur Blythe couldn't come a moment too soon. He's a major figure, one of the few younger musicians who'd fit into the Ellington reed section; he's got that distinct, lit-from-within sound. Here he's backed by an expanded version of his Cuba band, including Hamiet Bluiett on baritone saxophone and Famoudou Don Moye on drums. The music is light and airy, with a bounce that hides the silver edge of Blythe's improvisations.

MCCOY TYNER

44th Street Suite [Red Baron]

McCoy Tyner's recent albums have been uneven at best, but this one, featuring David Murray and Arthur Blythe, is probably his best in a decade. Not only does Tyner's playing have a clarity it sometimes lacks elsewhere, but Blythe radiates a joy that most improvisers don't seem to get anymore. And Murray is wild; together they balance each other out while Ron Carter and Aaron Scott cruise away at full speed.

LIDA HUSIK

Bozo [Shimmy-Disc]

The method is simple: elementary riffs behind droned vocals, occasionally rising—or devolving—to neo-psychedelic rave-downs. Whether you find this more than pleasantly spacey background music depends not only on your patience but how carefully you listen to Husik's lyrics—which hover on the edge of poetry. Or something. (JAF, Box 1187, New York, NY 10116)—*Scott Isler*

BRIAN MELVIN TRIO

Standards Zone [Global Pacific]

The hypemobile's in high gear for this one: "Jaco Pastorius' last recording!" "His only session in a piano trio!" As per usual, the selling points serve mainly to distract the listener from the quality of the music, and the classy contributions of drummer Melvin and pianist Jon Davis. Yet no matter how scintillating Melvin's solo is on "So What," or how impressively Davis scurries around the keyboard during "Village Blues," the facts can't be denied: Jaco *owns* this stuff from the first note. Every line he plays is utterly commanding; he offers Melvin and Davis countless motifs to toy with, and always provides the right mood. And when he steps out on "Fire Water," we're treated to a double-stop clinic. Without Pastorius, this would have been a competent, unexciting album; with him, it's got the distinct air of genius. (Box 2001, Sonoma, CA 95476)—*Mac Randall*

BILL BRUFORD'S EARTHWORKS

All Heaven Broke Loose [Editions EG]

After three superb outings in a row, it should go without saying: These guys are on to something. Casually shrugging off the conventions of compositional structure, joyfully detonating stylistic barriers, Earthworks obey only one rule—their tunes must sound cool. And they do. The various left turns of the pieces here keep you guessing; "Pigalle," for example, starts out with a slightly seedy, carnival-like atmosphere and then gets Coltranesque, while "Splashing Out" might be best described as acid-house-meets-Varese (before it spontaneously self-destructs, that is). The title track is some sort of peak for Bruford and his colleagues, masterfully blending a Salvation Army band theme with a brooding chordal-drum meditation. Saxophonist Iain Ballamy and trumpeter/keyboardist/E-flat horn man Django Bates are brilliant, David Torn and Bruford co-produce with taste and an ear for the uncommon. Go buy it. (Caroline Records, 114 W. 26th St., New York, NY 10001)—*Mac Randall*

SUNDAY ALL OVER THE WORLD

Kneeling at the Shrine [EG]

The name of Robert Fripp's new band might not roll off the tongue as easily as King Crimson, but otherwise Sunday All Over the World carries on admirably in the Frippian tradition, offering 11 dark, alluring and highly idiosyncratic forays into prog-rock, '90s-style. Imagine something similar to the last edition of Crimson, a brainy, groove-conscious outfit heavy on the polyrhythms and tight instrumental counterpoint. This record offers plenty of delicacy and savagery, devastating dynamics and chattering, gamelan-like ensemble work in Fripp's favorite odd time signatures. However, a couple of the songs, particularly the sardonic "If I Were a Man," wouldn't sound out of place on the (thinking person's?) dancefloor. The only thing conspicuously absent from this music is the kind of zany humor once provided by Crimson sidekick Adrian Belew. Yet that very lack is great news for Frippophiles. For once, Fripp the guitarist has plenty of space to show his stuff, which he does in his usual unpredictable manner, whether slashing through dissonant acoustic chords on "Strange Girls" or building up layers of ethereal tape-loop Frippertronics on the title cut. The raging, fuzzed-out solos on "Blood Bruise Tattoo" and "Storm Angel" are classics of their kind. Singer Toyah Willcox (Mrs. Fripp) holds up well against the onslaught; her singing calls Kate Bush to mind, except Toyah sounds more like an inhabitant of this planet. (Caroline Records, 114 West 26th St., New York, NY 10001)—*Mac Randall*

GLENN GOULD

Conducts and Plays Wagner [Sony]

The late pianist's first recording as a conductor was also his last, made in '82 (the year he died) and released

posthumously. A single piece, Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll," it's taken at a snail's pace and clocks in a good five minutes longer than most renditions (it runs 24:28). It's a connoisseur's version, with tonal savoring taking precedent over rhythmic momentum and thematic contrast. It'd be insane to recommend this to someone not familiar with the piece; those who know it should, however, take pleasure in Gould's atomizing of Wagner's soundworld, as well as the not-entirely-unexpected deposits of humor. The disc is filled out by a reissue of Gould's Wagner piano transcriptions, recorded in '75. They're virtuosic (though he cheats a little with overdubbing) and less eccentric than the orchestral "Idyll." Though just attempting to render "Siegfried's Rhine Journey" in pianistic terms is a little mad—call it audacious.—*Richard C. Walls*

MICHELLE MAKARSKI

Music of John Harbison, John Cage, Stephen Hartke and Yehudi Wyner [New World]

Makarski, who won the 1989 Carnegie Hall International American Music Competition, has gone all-American on her compelling debut. By turns introspective, irreverent and inventive, Makarski's album serves the twin function of showcasing her instrumental skills and casting deserved light on the music of a few significant composers from our shores. The terrain includes the languid solo violin of John Harbison's *Four Songs of Solitude* and the mesmerizing balance of delicacy and detachment on John Cage's *Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard*, with accompanist Brent McMunn. The highlight is Stephen Hartke's clever "Oh Them Rats Is Mean in My Kitchen," which detours from classical vocabulary to the blues and back, and is a choice two-violin foil for Makarski and her husband, Ron Copes. Yehudi Wyner's gnarled, post-serial "Concert Duo for Violin and Piano" closes a strong debut on a terse note.—*Josef Woodard*

MR. BIG

Lean Into It [Atlantic]

Purists might complain about Paul Gilbert and Billy Sheehan's "harmony guitar and bass drill solo" (as Sheehan puts it), Gilbert's showy outfit in the solo sequence and his beads and fringe-laden guitar. However, anyone who actually watches this informal, funny, hang-out-with-the-band video will also be struck by the band's bluesy roots, lovingly explicated by singer Eric Martin, and their should-be-huge-hit, the Beatlesesque acoustic "To Be with You." And guitarists and air guitarists alike can relate to Gilbert's confessions of early frustration with lessons as a kid.—*Jill Blardinelli*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

One Hand Don't Clap [Rhapsody Films]

Kavery Dutta's thoughtful documentary on the roots and social resonances of Trinidadian calypso puts a long-overdue lens on perhaps the most famous and least understood cultural idiom in the musically fertile Caribbean. Dutta focuses on the legendary Lord Kitchener, calypso's greatest artist, and Calypso Rose, the most prominent female performer and an exuberant revolutionary in what had been an all-male dominion. Their oral histories are crosscut with that of the music, with generous space—perhaps too generous—also given to live performances by such leading calypsonians as Black Stalin and David Rudder. Educational for novices; for calypso fans, it's the next best thing to being there. (Box 179, New York, NY 10014)—*Mark Rowland*

SOUNDGARDEN

Louder Than Live [A&M Records]

Soundgarden's first home video captures the two competing sides of the band—arty neuvo hippies (singer Chris Cornell definitely doesn't dress like a metal singer) and guys who still have enough dirty humor that they can prove to *2 Live Crew* that risqué doesn't have to equal sexist-stupid. Some fans think Soundgarden are sabotaging themselves when their most anthemic tune, "Big Dumb Sex," has the F-word and thus can't be played on radio or MTV. Watch this video, though, and see if you don't think the live footage from the Whiskey is enhanced by Chris Cornell's line introducing "Big Dumb Sex": "This is your chance to tell the band to fuck off... c'mon, you can do better than that...fuck you too!!! Doesn't that feel better?"—*Jill Blardinelli*

ALEXANDER "SKIP" SPENCE

Oar [Sony Special Products]

Skip Spence, Jefferson Airplane's first drummer and founding member of Moby Grape, has been given the sobriquet "the American Syd Barrett." The similarities are striking: Both were seminal figures in their respective '60s scenes, both were brilliant songwriters too fragile to handle their sudden fame, both underwent drug-related flip-outs in 1968 and dropped out of the business. And both put out solo albums toward decade's end, containing songs that were alternately charming, disturbing and too chaotic to be classified. Though some of *Oar* has a distinct *Madcap Laughs* atmosphere, Skip sounds less optimistic than Syd, and his somber style owes more to American folk and country. The CD includes approximately 20 minutes of material edited out of the original album, mainly psychotic studio jams that, depending on your mood, can be intriguing or excruciating. Yet *Oar*'s return is worth hailing—just check out "Diana" or "War in Peace" if you want a definition of unique music.—*Mac Randall*

JAPAN

Gentlemen Take Polaroids [Blue Plate]

Tin Drum [Blue Plate]

Hard to believe this stuff's over 10 years old, partly because we're still hearing its aftereffects—not only technopop and new age, but also the "world beat" phenomenon and the merging of traditional ethnic musics and the dancefloor. David Sylvian and his pals in Japan were exploring those regions a while ago, and while their technology has dated, their music hasn't. Mick Karn's restless, growling basslines are as infectious as ever, while the dark ballads "Nightporter" (*Gentlemen*) and "Ghosts" (*Tin Drum*) anticipate Sylvian's solo work (they also ditch the slightly annoying vocal mannerisms he displays elsewhere). In one sense, these albums remind me of mid-'70s Eno: The band's feel is so unusual that the passing of time doesn't affect it, and that's rare indeed. *Gentlemen* has two bonus tracks, both fine ambient instrumentals; *Tin Drum* doesn't have any extras and doesn't need any. (Caroline Records, 114 W. 26th St., New York, NY 10001)—*Mac Randall*

GEORGE JONES

The Best of George Jones 1955–67 [Rhino]

At this point, with Jones' catalog in such a shambles, anything that attempts to compile the original recordings of his honky-tonk hits would be reason to raise the glass in appreciation. This Rhino comp comes with top-notch sound quality, the obligatory handsome booklet with photos, competent, instructional liner notes and 18 cuts (on CD, 12 on cassette). It's not the boxed set it should be, but hey, Jones' greatest asset has always been his voice; here, he has the material to match. None of his later work's parodic qualities or Sherill-engineered sweetenings—just the raw materials of a country star singing from his heart with his feet still touching the ground.—*Rob O'Connor*

NRBQ

Peek-a-Boo [Rhino]

Despite the slowly swelling ranks of Q-heads, NRBQ remains one of America's best-kept secrets—a rare great rock 'n' roll band which proves that you can have veteran status, be musically ripe and enjoy arrested adolescence all at once. Where does the curious, would-be Q-head turn for a taste of this national treasure? The retrospective package *Peek-a-Boo* is a fine place to start. Like one of the band's good live sets, the 35-cut, two-CD album veers from the raucous ("Me and the Boys") to the wacky ("Here Comes Terry") to the sweetest Beatlesesque pop you could ask for ("How Can I Make You Love Me"). The package also dips into NRBQ's voluminous oddity vault for such delights as their tender chestnut "Christmas Wish" and their twisted take on "Whistle While You Work," from Hal Willner's Disney music project *Stay Awake*. It could be an anthem: 20 years into it, NRBQ still whistle while they work.—*Josef Woodard*

ISAAC HAYES

Joy [Fantasy]

Hayes' music was part of the '70s soul reinvention, the slinky make-out rhythms setting the stage for Donna Summer and disco, while its gradual instrumental build left sampler-types a treasure chest of sounds and textures (just ask Public Enemy). Using *Shaft*'s seductive string arrangements and Hayes' own electronically enhanced voice, the title cut funks for 15-plus minutes of unrelenting sex-jam. "I Love You, That's All" opens with two minutes of pre-coitus inspiration, then into a sentimental tune about—what else?—*love*. Hayes was later eclipsed by Barry White and never regained composure, but this, along with *Hot Buttered Soul*, shows us who was really king.—*Rob O'Connor*

CLYDE MCPHATTER

Deep Sea Ball/The Best Of [Atlantic]

McPhatter's best work was behind him when he left the Drifters to go solo, but this overdue compilation paints a riveting portrait of crossover dreams, late-'50s style. Shirking the vibrant R&B of "Money Honey" to recast himself as an all-purpose entertainer, Clyde turned out everything from charming gospel-flecked pop ("A Lover's Question") to dreadful kitsch in a shameless plea for acceptance. At his tackiest McPhatter still had that voice, the heart-stopping instrument of an earth angel. Handled properly, he could have been bigger than Jackie Wilson. What a waste.—*Jon Young*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Jazz Age: New York in the Twenties [Bluebird/RCA]

For decades this music was called Mickey Mouse and considered suitable only for cartoon soundtracks. Then, a miracle: Wynton Marsalis was born. The New Traditionalists may not have embraced this style yet, but the time is right to reconsider its charming formal convolutions. This healthy serving (22 selections) from four late-'20s outfits emphasizes chamber-jazz voicings and scampering whole-tone harmonies. And if the vo-do-de-o vocals are impossible to take straight-faced...well, this *is* supposed to be fun music.

—*Scott Isler*

ELVIS PRESLEY

Collectors Gold [RCA]

Collectors must have an alchemical sense of gold in this case. Not that there aren't some gems among these three CDs of alternate takes from 1960s soundtrack and studio sessions, and comeback shows. But the songs are of such generally hack quality that it's no wonder El had trouble taking them seriously. What a waste; he could sing when he had something to sing about. "Reconsider Baby" cuts through even the Vegas glitz. Approach with caution.

—*Scott Isler*

DYKE AND THE BLAZERS

So Sharp! [Kent]

If he wasn't exactly Mr. Dynamite, Arlester "Dyke" Christian was at least Mr. Long Fuse. With a too-tight band behind him Dyke had no problem coming up with one eminently danceable riff after another—starting in 1966 with "Funky Broadway" (a bigger hit for Wilson Pickett) and up to his untimely death in 1971. *So Sharp!*, including the comedic tour de force "The Wrong House," is a 71-minute party on CD. Calling all DJs: A scaled-down version is also available on vinyl. (46-50 Steele Road, London NW10 7AS)—*Scott Isler*

VARIOUS HODADS

Big Surf [UK Ace]

Somewhere a doctoral candidate can discourse earnestly on the stylistic differences between the Lively Ones, Impacts, Centurions and two other groups featured here. But as far as we're concerned, this staggering CD—nearly three dozen surf instrumentals from the Del-Fi catalog—is a 76-minute minimalist tapestry of trebly guitar, sputtering Echoplexes, occasionally in-tune saxophone and variations on "Malagueña." What did Jimi Hendrix say about this stuff? (46-50 Steele Road, London NW10 7AS)—*Scott Isler*

RECORDINGS

[*cont'd from page 82*] Gently rippling piano, a braised vocal, riffing brass and a backbeat you can't lose it are the hallmarks of this genial music.

Until now the benchmark Domino collection has been the British six-LP *Fats Domino Story*. *"They Call Me the Fat Man..."* leans more toward the late '50s and early '60s than *Story*, which had 22 cuts not included here. (Then again, *"Fat Man"* has 26 tracks not on *Story*; Domino was prolific, among other virtues.) Compilation producer/researcher Ron Furmanek has carefully matched tape-pitch against original 45s often mastered with the tape running above recording speed. However, three very early tunes are slower than they appear on *The Fats Domino Story*. Other nitpicky details available only with an SASE.

"They Call Me the Fat Man..." comes with *de rigueur* 5¼x11¼" booklet crammed with photos, essay, discography (but no personnel listing), etc. It's no disrespect to those involved to say that never has a project of this scope needed less in the way of explication. Domino appeals because he is so immediately grasped. This may be the most sheerly playable CD boxed set of any released this season. In keeping with its honoree, *"They Call Me the Fat Man..."* looks bulky and sounds graceful. Who could ask for a better tribute?

—Scott Isler

Various Orators

Great Speeches of the 20th Century
(Rhino)

THE 48 SELECTIONS ON THIS FOUR-CD SET represent 53 rhetorical contributions totaling 4:38:13. Of these 53, 45 are by white men, only a couple of whom can be described as dissenting from anything significant. Gloria Steinem, a fine orator and one of just four women, is given 30 seconds to explain the women's movement. And that's it for feminism. Jerry Rubin, a sell-out hack, gets 3:30 to explain cop-baiting technique at a Yippie convention. And that's it for the anti-war movement. Martin Luther King gets 16:10 for his "I Have a Dream" speech, but Malcolm X gets only 1:16 to explain black power. And that's it for the civil rights movement. Thus Great Speeches of the 20th Century does not rate high as a showcase for multiculturalism.

A more accurate title would be *Big Lies of the 20th Century*, since most of the orators make Caligula look like Santa Claus. Most of the orators are, of course, Presidents. The coldest lie is told by Harry Truman, who announces the United States has just dropped the A-bomb on "Hiroshima, a military base," appropriately starting the atomic age with a war crime and a lie so hideous that "lie" doesn't begin to describe the moral stench.

As long as we're on the subject of moral stench, it should be noted that Richard Nixon receives by

far the most time with seven selections totaling just under 50 minutes. Was he the best orator in the twentieth century? No. Was he the most fascinating? Yes. Precisely because he was so bad at lying. Unlike Reagan, he knew he was lying, and he couldn't tell the truth even when it would have been to his advantage. His "Checkers" speech must be the most hilarious hunk of dissemblage in the history of human mendacity, although I will accept arguments for his concession speech after losing for governor of California. It's even funnier when he resorts to the same techniques—with less logic—two decades after "Checkers," during Watergate. Biggest surprise: Khrushchev boxed his ears in the "Kitchen Debate."

I guess on balance I have to endorse this collection. It is history. However dismal the facts, however shocking to hear how few of our rulers were actually great orators, it is exhilarating to hear again. Rock 'n' roll appears even more of a miracle amidst this bloodlust and paranoia. Perhaps next year Rhino will put out a boxed set called *Great Dissenters of the 20th Century* and give the other side a chance. Abbie Hoffman, anyone? **—Charles M. Young**

Phil Spector

◆

Back to Mono 1958–1969
(Phil Spector/Abkco)

PHIL SPECTOR WILL PROBABLY BE THE ONLY producer to win a boxed set of his own, and justly so. The singles he produced in the '50s and '60s, fueled by equal portions of arrogance, inspiration, megalomania and vision, bore the stamp of a personality who viewed his artists as a white paper upon which he could scrawl his signature, writ huge.

Initially the architect of such cloudy-sounding miniatures as the Teddy Bears' "To Know Him Is to Love Him" (which he wrote and on which he played guitar and sang) and the Paris Sisters' "I Love How You Love Me," Spector ultimately amped his studio style into a firestorm of massed strings, horns and percussion—Armageddon with a backbeat. His characteristic vocalists—Darlene Love, La La Brooks, Bill Medley and Bobby Hatfield of the Righteous Brothers, and Veronica Bennett (later Ronnie Spector, and no wonder he married her)—scythed through this lustrous cacophony, which was compressed by the producer into a monophonic dreadnought.

Back to Mono collects 60 of Spector's most mind-bending productions on three CDs. A fourth is devoted to *A Christmas Gift to You from Phil Spector*, the 1963 seasonal release; if other Xmas albums may be considered as lacy audio snowfalls, Spector's is a sonic avalanche. Scholars may grouse that the thick booklet accompanying this box is skimpily annotated (track-by-track notes are thin, and anyone who hasn't already read Tom Wolfe's "The First Tycoon of Teen," reproduced here, probably shouldn't own this set). But the music remains glorious, impassioned, lunatic teen-stuff, mostly unfaded by the passage of time. Who cannot be moved by the Spanish swagger of the Crystals' "Uptown," the lovably stupid lope of Bobb B. Soxx & the Blue Jeans' "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah," the supreme tension of the Ronettes' "Be My Baby," the orgasmic eruptions of the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'," the hubristic hysteria of Ike and Tina Turner's "River Deep, Mountain High"? Nobody, that's who.

Phil Spector's records weren't just over the top, they never recognized a top to begin with. It's that way-out-there quality that makes his hits, and his misses, such exciting listening even today. Spector is the prime model of the compulsive-obsessive technocrat, and we should thank him for it every time our ears ring and our blood sings when listening to one of his "little symphonies for the kids." **—Chris Morris**

SYNTH DESIGN

[cont'd from page 82] and pages of parameters. The virtual space of programming has expanded. But the user-interface keyhole hasn't grown proportionately.

Meanwhile, a whole cluster of outside factors have diminished musicians' willingness to struggle in high-tech hyperspace: recession, a retro-swing in musical tastes and the overall Twilight of MIDI. Of course, dedicated synthesists continue to follow every new development, and the R&D staffs at the synth companies aren't letting them down. But this small techno-elite hardly makes up the kind of mammoth customer base the marketing departments want to see.

How can R&D and marketing get together on this? Just as they did in the early '80s: presets. Only now we've gone beyond preset sounds, into *preset music*. Auto-accompaniment technology has long been in place, thanks to the department-store keyboard market. But when this technology is grafted onto professional instruments, the only technique fostered is the ability to adapt oneself to preexisting musical patterns. Imagine Jimmy Page's Les Paul insisting on playing "Lady of Spain" while he was trying to write "Stairway to Heaven."

Are manufacturers starting to emphasize prefab music over good tone in their products? That may be why everybody's going back to old analog machines. The analog revival is only a past-tense solution to a future-tense problem. Maybe the new "virtual reality" technology has the real answer. Maybe players will one day be able to enter a tactile and visual "world" of sound parameters, fabricated entirely by computer.

Or maybe we just need to update the old concept of modular synthesis—permitting synthesists to buy only those high-tech parameters that they really need. Right now synth design is package-oriented, a bit like cable TV: You gotta pay for the alternative micro-tuning algorithms even if you're never going to use them. If synth design is to march boldly into the future, it needs something better than a prefab beat. Ⓜ

PALMER

[cont'd from page 71] entourage of managers, friends, wives, and as everyone stood around watching the Dirty Dozen the cultural resonances were dizzying: Here was Earl Palmer, waiting to hear the Dozen's version of the "Flintstones" theme he recorded 30 years ago, surrounded by the group whose biggest hit is a remake of "La Bamba"—Earl Palmer on drums, 1959. Earl wasn't just standing there; his spirit presided. Hidalgo, in big black clodhoppers and ponytail, asked him what he'd used on Ritchie Valens' "Donna." Sticks? Brushes? "Closed brushes," said Earl.

Earl sat down. "I'm stressed out," he said. His comrade from the '50s, bassist Chuck Badie, materialized in a beret and the two wandered into the food trailer. Munching a po' boy, Earl contemplated a hot-sauce bottle. Badie started to splutter. Earl burst into his raspy guffaw. "Badie, man, I had forgotten! Me and Badie, we'd get off from the Dew Drop at five, six in the morning and we'd go down to the Audubon Zoo. Chuck and I always wanted to hang out, everyone else went home. We would walk around the zoo at dawn smoking reefer, watching the monkeys clown. And the damn monkeys would throw their shit on us! So we went back to the Dew Drop, stole a bottle of hot sauce, sprinkled it on some peanuts and fed 'em to the monkeys. They started squeakin', hoppin' up and down, runnin' around. *But they kept eating the peanuts!* Even though it was drivin' 'em crazy!" The two gray-haired men were knock-kneed with laughter, wiping their eyes, holding each other up. "That's why," Earl gasped, "when they say you're as dumb as a monkey—maaan, YOU DUMB!" Ⓜ

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November 92	September 7
December 92	October 5
1993	
January 93	November 6
February 93	December 9

BIG DEALS

[cont'd from page 51] accede to Madonna's demands, which were believed to include the creation of a stand-alone film and music operation à la Michael Jackson's deal with Sony. The snag was that Madonna still reportedly owes the company's Sire label as many as three albums—so what's the hurry?

Well, thank God for those guys at Sony. First their deal with Jackson showed Madonna what to ask for, and then the signing of Aerosmith—who probably won't show up on the Columbia label before 1997—proved that the remaining length of a contract needn't stand in the way of a top-of-the-market deal.

There are plenty of companies who can give Madonna the kind of deal she is believed to want: Sony, Matsushita (which owns MCA) and Thorn/EMI all cover music and films, while PolyGram—whose Propaganda Films co-produced *Truth or Dare*—recently announced it will invest $200 million in increasing its Hollywood presence and would have to be considered the company with the most to gain from an association with Madonna. After all, these are the same guys who paid Chris Blackwell almost $500 million for U2 and the Bob Marley catalog. But since Time-Warner is the company with the most to lose, they will likely offer Madonna the most.

Imagine Madonna walking into Ross' office to work out the final figure, an old mechanical adding machine under her arm—you know, the kind that shows up as a prop in those great old Warner Bros. cartoons. Placing the machine on Ross' desk, she can look him in the eye, pull maniacally on the machine's lever and punch up just about whatever number she wants while quoting that other great Time-Warner icon:

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And I thought, if a song like that
Can make it on a hip format
Rock 'n' roll is deader than James Dean

The first five notes would make me shiver
From my head down to my liver
The English teacher, damn it,
Made us diagram it

I still recall his metaphors
For Dylan, Jagger and the Doors
And how that one long song defined
The day the music whined

So bye bye Miss American Pie
What's as hokey as a folkie
With a tear in his eye?
Hippie chicks go for a sensitive guy
Saying, "Let's go watch him break down and cry"

Patch my jeans and start the love-in
I'm campagning for McGovern
Dick and Spiro gotta go
"Goodbye, Papa, it's hard to die"
Except when "Rocky Mountain High"
is always playing on the radio

As miniskirts gave way to maxi
Harry drove off in his taxi
Take Roberta Flack along!
She's killing me with her song

The tillerman was having tea
While Carole wove her tapestry
I found your diary 'neath a tree
The day the music whined

So bye bye...

Scandal spread fast as phlebitis
Nixon begged, "Please don't indict us"
The night the Georgia lights went out
With gas lines and an oil embargo
We tuned in to Donna Fargo
What's she got to be so happy about?

Records came off the conveyor
overdubbed layer by layer
every song sounded like Leo Sayer
The day the music whined

So bye bye...

Everyone got up to dance
We learned to bump by the seat
of our pants
and hustle just like Van McCoy
Disco Tex and the Sex-o-lettes
"What You See Is What You Get"
A brick house is a house you can't destroy

Sylvia turned into Donna Summer
Disco drummers got dumber and dumber
Radio refused to play Rotten and Strummer
The day the music whined

So bye bye...

And there we were in skinny ties
pretending we had slanted eyes
singing "Turning Japanese"
"Best Friend's Girlfriend" by the Cars
was popular in singles bars
Where best friend's girlfriend
gives you his disease

Jake and Elwood quit TV
The hostages were finally free
Tony tied ribbons 'round the old oak tree
The day the music whined

So bye bye...

Frey left Henley, Becker left Fagen
Sinatra danced with Mrs. Reagan
Were they having an affair?
Lionel sang for the ladies
Rock got corporate in the '80s
Pepsi almost burned off Michael's hair

Rockwell: "Someone's watching me"
Men at Work: "Who can it be?"
It's just us watching MTV!
The day the music whined

So bye bye...

Luftballoons floated above
The battlefield we made of love
Flock of Seagulls sang "I Ran"
In a big country dreams stay with you
If you can imitate U2
Or eat your dinner from a garbage can

Young girls loved Duran in Rio
Boys loved Maiden, Priest, and Dio
Stickers warned them of the risks
Belinda knocked off Benatar
Synth and samples cut guitar
We traded vinyl in for compact discs

And while Gordon read a book on Jung
Conservatism swept the young
Restricted clubs learned
to Wang Chung
The day the music whined

So bye bye...

I met a girl with bleached blonde hair
Like a virgin in her underwear
pumping herself into shape
I went down to the T-shirt store
To buy the clothes my heroes wore
But the man there said the bands just
mimed to tape

And in the halls reunion tours
were organized by Schlitz and Coors
No rebel leaders ranted
The long hair was transplanted

And the three on whom I most depend
Entwistle, Daltrey and Townshend
Did commercials in the end
The day the music whined

So bye bye Miss American Pie
Stop your bitchin' now we're rich and
now we don't have to try
Record sales only improve when you die
And "bye bye" 's just the same as "buy, buy"

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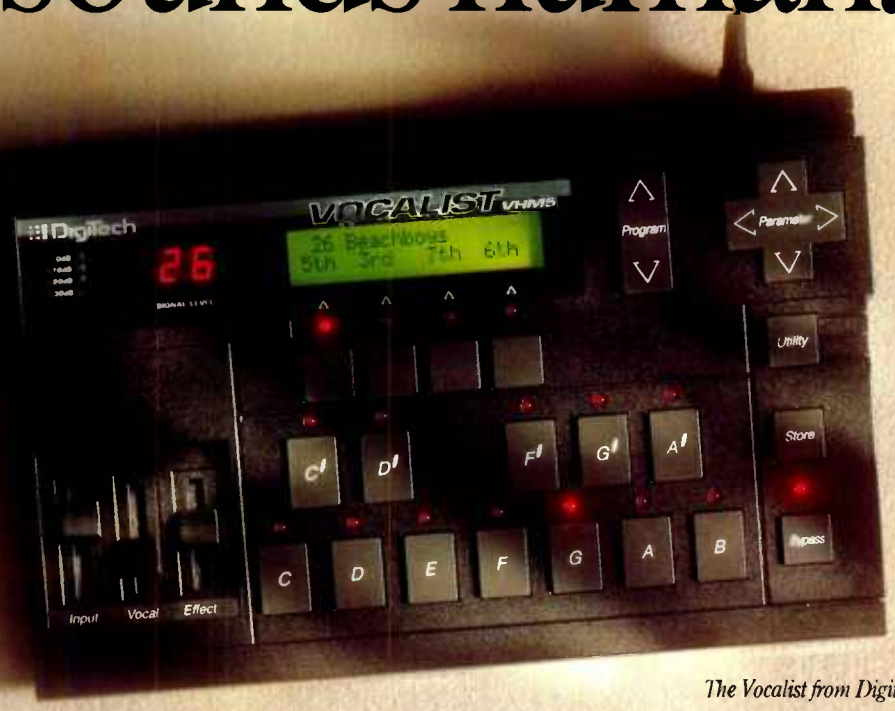

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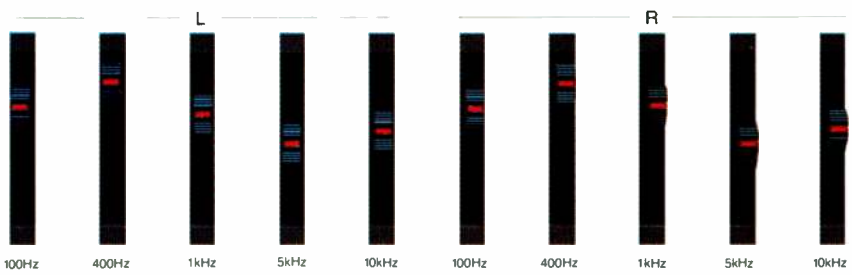

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